Dudley
CHRONICLE

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Drunk thug whistled Rottweiler to help evade arrest

YOB'S DOG BIT POLICE OFFICER

Report by Jamie Brassington

A YOB's Rottweiler bit a policeman twice while the officer was trying to make an arrest, a court heard.

Thomas Winkett had to be pepper-sprayed by the officer and wrestled to the ground because he was drunk and out of control in Brierley Hill High Street.

But Wolverhampton Crown Court was told that as the officer grappled with Winkett, his Rottweiler called Taz attacked, biting the officer twice on his left ankle and forcing him to release Winkett.

Winkett, of Fenston Street, Brockmoor, had whistled his dog to help him escape police custody.

The incident on June 18 took place after Winkett kicked out at cars, had assaulted his friend and attacked a woman who had told him to put his dog on a lead.

Winkett pleaded guilty to affray and being in charge of a dangerously out of control dog.

Kennel

Recorder Douglas Reading gave Winkett a 20 month suspended prison sentence, which was reduced to 18 months due to his early guilty plea to affray.

For the second offence, Winkett was handed a six months suspended sentence, reduced to four, for his early guilty plea. Both sentences to run concurrently.

Winkett was banned from owning a dog for five years and ordered to pay £1,850 in kennel fees for Taz to the police.

Mr Reading heard that Winkett ventured drunk into the High Street in the early hours of June 18 to buy cigarettes following a row with his partner.

He took along two of the family's dogs, the Rottweiler and also a Chihuahua called Dolly. Both dogs were off the lead.

During the incident the Chihuahua was hit by a passing car and ran off, and was found three days later. Meanwhile, Winkett got into a fist fight with a friend.

The Rottweiler will be returned to Winkett's partner but must be muzzled and on a lead in public places at all times.

DUDLEY'S REANNE IS TOP OF THE POTS AGAIN

British open snooker champion Dudley's Reanne Evans with runner-up Nutcharut Wongharuthai at the Stourbridge Institute

BLACK Country snooker ace Reanne Evans claimed her second title of the season as she won the British Open – and celebrated with a McDonald's!

After winning the trophy on home ground she shared on Instagram a picture of herself and her daughter tucking into the fast food saying 'celebrating in style ha.'

Dudley's 11-time world champion sealed the championship with a 4-0 victory against Nutcharut Wongharuthai, from Thailand, at the tournament staged at the Stourbridge Institute.

This was the fourth consecutive WLBS final for the 32-year-old.

Wongharuthai had seen off Netherton's Maria Catalano, cousin of snooker champion Ronnie O'Sullivan to reach her maiden final.

Reanne said: "I've been struggling for form. But I felt a little bit more comfortable and I am happy with the win. It has been good to see everyone again this weekend and to be back competing at a tournament after a little gap in the season.

"I am now looking forward to the World Championship and hopefully going into the tournament with this win will put me in good stead."

The Women's World Championships in Malta are from March 14 to 7.

APPEAL

Footballers help boost fund for Isla

FORMER Wolves, Albion and Walsall players rallied around for a charity match that raised £6,000 towards a two-year-old girl's cancer treatment in America.

Ex-Wolves 'keeper Matt Murray brought the West Midlands All Stars to play Dormston School Old Boys at Lye Town on Sunday.

Isla Austin is being flown to New York for treatment aimed at preventing her cancer coming back. Isla was diagnosed with cancer on her first birthday and has since had chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery.

● **Pictures and report - page 14**

ADDICTION

Radical new way to tackle drug crime

SUPPORT workers in the Black Country have welcomed radical plans to curb drug-fuelled crime, insisting: "We must support addicts and not punish them."

Sunny Dhadley, who works with drug addicts in the Black Country, said it was time for a 'fresh approach' to 'transform society' by assisting those suffering from substance dependence.

● **Free heroin scheme – page 17**

CAMPAIGN

Petition launched over knife crime

A CAMPAIGN to change the law on knife crime has been launched by The Express & Star, The Chronicle's sister newspaper, following a surge of violence in the region. Since January there has been 21 stabbings, five resulting in fatalities. The petition calls for mandatory prison sentences for possession of an offensive weapon.

● **Visit change.org to sign the petition.**

INSIDE

BRENDA HAS GOT THE BEAT

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CONTACT US

EDITORIAL:
Tel: 01384 353201/01384 353205
E-mail: dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

SPORTS:
Tel: 01902 319453
E-mail: chron.sport@expressandstar.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHIC: Tel: 01902 319430
E-mail: picturedesk@expressandstar.co.uk

ADVERTISING: Emma Parkes
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MOTORING: Liz Barratt
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Tel: 01902 319990
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Etheridge: it's my time to lead UKIP

Bill Etheridge – leadership bid

WEST Midlands Euro MP Bill Etheridge has announced his intention to stand for the leadership of UKIP, vowing to transform the Black Country into a post-Brexit industrial powerhouse.

The MEP, who is also a Sedgley councillor. said his party needed 'a new lease of life' following 18 months of turmoil which has seen the party go through four leaders. Now Mr Etheridge insists: 'It's my time to lead.'

It came as Henry Bolton's short reign came to an end when he was sacked by a members' vote at an emergency meeting of UKIP in Birmingham on Saturday.

Mr Etheridge said: "I am now actively sounding people out for support and I have already had a lot of people contact me saying it is time for me to stand.

"I believe that this is the right time for me and to make sure we have a West Midlands-based leader of a national party for a change.

"I want UKIP to have a strong focus on a manufacturing renaissance for the country. We'll be looking at bringing back those traditional jobs to the UK that we have lost over a period of decades in changes that have badly hurt the West Midlands.

"Post-Brexit we will be looking at making the Black Country an industrial powerhouse again."

Mr Bolton had been given a vote of no confidence by the ruling NEC after he refused to cut ties with Jo Marney – his 25-year-old former girlfriend who sent racist texts about Prince Harry's fiance Meghan Markle.

Mr Etheridge added: "He was an absolute disaster and had to go."

Gerard Batten acts as UKIP's interim leader for the next 90 days, the party's eighth leader since Nigel Farage resigned after the EU referendum.

I worry most about burying my little boy

"THERE is no way to describe it. The hope of there being something, anything, that can help is what you cling onto as a parent."

The heartbreaking words of Rebbekah Collins, who has been told her five-year-old son Ben has just months to live.

What started with a swollen finger resulted in Ben being diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma, a form of cancer, at the age of three.

Since then, Rebbekah and husband Lee, from Brierley Hill, have tried everything to try to help their son beat the disease.

They were even dealt the cruellest of blows after Ben went into remission last year following an initially successful medical trial – only for the cancer to return.

Another trial failed, leaving them with no more options and experts have said Ben has between two and six months to live.

Assessment

The first sign something was wrong came in August 2015 when Ben's finger swelled up – but never did Rebbekah suspect Ben could be seriously ill.

She said: "I thought he hasn't hurt himself or caught it in anything so I took him to out-of-hours and got sent to a paediatrician for an assessment."

Tests were carried and in March 2016 the Brockmoor Primary School pupil was diagnosed.

Rebbekah said: "The room closed in. I was nervous anyway because it was only a couple of days earlier they set up the appointment. But it didn't occur to me it could be cancer. It's the last thing you think."

The full-time mother, who also volunteers at her son's school, described the gut-wrenching moment the couple were told there was no hope left.

She said: "To be told your little boy you have given birth to, made every choice in his interests and put him through so much and it hasn't worked, you think 'why?'"

The devastated parents are now focusing on enjoying what time they have left with their son. Friends have rallied around and taken on the heartbreaking mission of raising funds for Ben's funeral.

Five-year-old Ben Collins from Brierley Hill who was diagnosed with Ewings cancer with his mother Rebbekah

"I hit a very distinct low point. What I worry about most is I won't be able to afford to bury my child with dignity. I have had to look at the costs of it – it's the sort of thing you have to prepare yourself for. I want to give him the best I possibly can."

Awareness

Rebbekah is now determined to raise awareness of the importance of bone marrow and blood donations in order to give sick children and adults a fighting chance of beating such diseases. She said: "We need people to sign up to the bone marrow register and to give blood. It is the two things children and adults need."

Donations have already started flooding in after a crowdfunding page was launched. A total of £700 has been raised so far, with a target of £4,000 having been set. Donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/amyjayne-clarke website.

Councils send in bailiffs to recover over £20m debt

COUNCILS in the Black Country and Staffordshire called in bailiffs to collect debts of more than £21 million over the last two and a half years, figures show.

From 2015, six local authorities used debt collectors on 161,471 occasions, with council tax arrears accounting for 65 per cent of cases.

A Freedom of Information request provided figures for the four Black Country councils, Lichfield District Council and South Staffordshire District Council.

Liberal Democrats in the West Midlands have called on all Labour-run councils to scrap a policy they say picks on 'the poorest and most vulnerable'. But local authorities say they have a duty to collect taxes in order to protect vital services.

Dudley Council was under Labour control until May last year when the Conservatives took over. The Labour-run authority sent out bailiffs 30,688 times to collect £7.4m.

Labour-run Wolverhampton City Council used bailiffs on 34,620 occasions to recover £4m worth of debts.

Fines

Labour-controlled Walsall Council used bailiffs 48,733 times from April 2015 to December 2017, bringing in £5.97m. Council tax accounted for 73 per cent of cases, while bailiffs were also sent out to collect arrears from parking fines and business rates.

Sandwell Council, also Labour, sent out debt collectors on 40,716 occasions over the same period but did not reveal how much money it had brought in.

Tory-run Lichfield District Council used bailiffs 2,903 times to collect £2.1m, and South Staffordshire District Council brought in £1.46m from 3,811 bailiff visits.

Paul Butters, a Liberal Democrat campaigner in the West Midlands, said: "Labour run councils are using people who knock on doors and take away people's possessions. They need to look at the way they collect their debt.

"We need our councils to vastly decrease their use of bailiffs."

A spokesman for the Department for Communities and Local Government said: "We expect councils to show sympathy for people in genuine hardship and only use bailiffs as a last resort.

"However, every penny of council tax that is not collected means a higher bill for those law-abiding citizens who do pay on time.

New LED street lights on the way

NEW street lights will be rolled out across Dudley. Environmentally-friendly LED lighting will be fitted on major roads over the next two years. Bosses had hoped to start the replacement last year but struggled to find the right bulbs.

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Carillion staff face hardship after collapse

MANY former Carillion workers say they have been cast adrift with no money and little information despite a string of Government reassurances about the welfare of staff caught up in the company's collapse.

This week the Insolvency Service claimed it was making a priority of making redundancy payments to former Carillion workers. But there have been claims that a lack of communication has left former staff in limbo.

More than 1,000 lost their jobs at the Wolverhampton-based construction and services giant since it collapsed last month with debts in the billions and just £29 million in the bank.

In an update this week the Official Receiver said deals with companies buying Carillion contracts had secured the jobs of another 942 workers, but 152 are being made redundant this week.

While 7,610 jobs have been secured, 1,141 have been lost and the future of around 10,000 UK workers still hangs in the balance.

Code

One former management level employee, who has managed to secure a new job, said he was still waiting for his P45 and the claimant code that would allow him to receive redundancy and statutory notice.

"I'm lucky, I've got a new job," he said. "But there are a lot of people out there who haven't, young families with no access to any money, no savings and no way of paying the bills.

"Some staff are trying to pay mortgages at the month end with nothing forthcoming from the liquidators and they feel totally abandoned with no feedback or support from the special managers."

The blame for the lack of information and the go-slow on redundancy is laid at the door of PwC, the accountancy firm brought in by the Official Receiver as special manager for the liquidation of Carillion on January 15.

One former Carillion manager said: "The way we have all been treated is absolutely deplorable."

An Insolvency Service spokesperson said: "We are prioritising the payment of redundancy payments owed to the former employees of Carillion and have established a specialist team spanning both the Redundancy Payments Service and the company's HR department to process these as quickly as possible."

Home conversion

A CARE home that closed down following a damning report by the Care Quality Commission is to be turned into a private house. Conversion of Red House care home in The Village, Kingswinford, has been approved.

Pair race to deliver £7m air ambulance

Mike Tindall and Nigel Mansell at Cosford

A FORMER Formula One champion and a Rugby World Cup winner have joined forces to deliver a £7 million air ambulance.

Racing legend Nigel Mansell CBE, and former England rugby captain Mike Tindall MBE handed the helicopter over to the Midlands Air Ambulance.

Mike and Nigel, both ambassadors for the charity, climbed aboard the state-of-the-art air ambulance to officially launch the delivery to its new home at RAF Cosford.

The money to buy the new helicopter came from donations from the public and a £1 million grant from the Government via The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

The New H145 upgraded air ambulance helicopter is now part of the Midlands Air Ambulance's fleet and is registered with the call sign 'G-RMAA'.

The Airbus helicopter will be operationally in service from Monday, serving the West Midlands from the charity's RAF Cosford base.The new helicopter will undertake an average of three air ambulance missions daily.

The larger interior means additional aircrew can be flown to major incident scenes and more medical equipment can be carried on board to treat more complex emergencies.

Mr Mansell said: "I am delighted to have been asked, along with Mike, to help deliver this incredible state-of-the-art lifesaving helicopter to the Midlands Air Ambulance charity, which will continue to help save thousands of lives.

"It is important to also help continue to raise awareness of the lifesaving work of the charity."

Sedgley police station among 24 facing axe

TWENTY-FOUR police stations, including in Sedgley, are to be axed under plans by West Midlands Police to save £5 million.

Other stations to close across the Black Country include Aldridge, Wednesfield and Prouds Lane in Bilston.

Stations in Wednesbury, Smethwick and Oldbury will also be released from the force's estate as part of the plan.

None of the stations to close in the Black Country – including Sedgley's in Vicar Street – are currently open to the public as most shut their public counters around three years ago.

Sedgley Police Station

The proposal, which is yet to be finalised, will see the force share more buildings with West Midlands Fire Service.

Officers from the force already work from Haden Cross Fire Station in Cradley Heath, following the closure of Old Hill Police Station.

Share

Further plans to share bases with local authorities and the NHS are also being looked at.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said the money saved will go towards protecting the jobs of police officers. The number of officers is already dropping by 78 to 6,450 next year.

It comes at a time when recorded crime across the region has risen by 14 per cent.

Mr Jamieson said: "After £145m cuts since 2010, with the level of funding from Government being squeezed year on year, I am having to find efficiencies to protect officer numbers.

"The £5m annual savings proposed in this strategy will help protect 100 police officer posts."

The move will leave 16 police bases in the Black Country – seven of them in Dudley.

Rattigan play next at drama group

The cast of Dudley Little Theatre's next production, Terrence Rattigan's Deep Blue Sea, in rehearsal

A THEATRE group is hoping to make a big splash with its next play. Dudley Little Theatre will put on four performances of Terrence Rattigan's 1952 play Deep Blue Sea next month.

Publicity officer Tony Stamp, who also acts in the production, said: "This was written when Rattigan was at the peak of his creativity. "It's basically a love triangle and the consequences of that love triangle, set in the 1950s. It is a nice, well-written play."

The play runs at Netherton Arts Centre from March 7 to 10 from 7.30pm. Tickets cost £8 (£7 concessions). They can be obtained from dudleylittletheatre.org website or by calling Chris Ridgeway on 07582 318017 or Rebecca Clee on 07954 424555.

There have been two feature film versions of the play, in 1955 with Kenneth More and Vivien Leigh and in 2011, with Rachel Weisz and Tom Hiddleston.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fowl play for KFC in delivery crisis

KFC has been forced to temporarily close several outlets or offer limited menus after a new delivery contract with DHL resulted in not enough chicken getting to the restaurants.

"We've brought a new delivery partner onboard, but they've had a couple of teething problems – getting fresh chicken out to 900 restaurants across the country is pretty complex!" KFC said. "No deliveries has meant some of our restaurants are closed and others are operating a limited menu, or shortened hours." DHL said: "Due to operational issues a number of deliveries in recent days have been incomplete or delayed."

Welsh quake gives region the jitters

A MINOR earthquake which struck south Wales was felt across the Black Country on Saturday afternoon.

The 4.4 magnitude quake struck approximately 20km (12.5 miles) north-east of Swansea at a depth of 7.4km, the British Geological Survey said.

Thousands experienced the 2.30pm tremor, said the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre, with people feeling it up to 300 miles from the epicentre.

The British Geological Survey said earthquakes of this magnitude happen in the UK every two to three years.

Top TV comedians headline Fitz Fest

TV comics Paul Sinha and Seann Walsh will headline a comedy festival being held in Stourbridge.

They are among 13 professional acts who will perform as part of Fitz Fest in the marquee at Katie Fitzgerald's, Wollaston, from June 7 to June 10.

Award-winning comic Sinha, who is best known as The Sinnerman on ITV teatime quiz show The Chase, will headline opening night on June 7. Walsh has appeared on Live At The Apollo and Mock The Week, and will close the festival on June 10. Tickets at www.skiddle.com/e/13150821

Prayer event being organised for park

AN open air prayer event is being held in Dudley, organised by local churches. Praying for Dudley takes place in Priory Park on May 20 from 2.30pm to 4pm.

It is being supported by the Church of England, the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches in the town, and has been organised as part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's The Kingdom Come campaign running from May 10 to 20.

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Electrician lit up by £1m jackpot

A MYSTERY EuroMillions winner from the West Midlands has become a millionaire even without touching a ticket.

The lucky electrician, – known as Mr B – scooped the £1m prize in the UK Millionaire Maker draw on February 2 by playing online. He plans to pay off his mortgage, go on holiday and treat the family.

Mr B, who also won £5.30 by matching two main numbers and one 'lucky star' number, played EuroMillions through national-lottery.co.uk website. National Lottery spokesman Andy Carter said: "Playing online is increasingly popular."

Pop-up events reaping rewards

TOWNS and cities that host regular 'pop-up' events like farmers' markets and festivals are reaping significant financial rewards, a new report says.

The West Midlands was identified as having the best range of pop-up events, including the Birmingham International Dance Festival, MADE festival and Crufts Dog Show.

A study of 1,000 households found that these more vibrant and active areas saw knock-on effects such as more trade for local businesses.

Gavin Hepburn, director at ATG Access who commissioned the survey, said events also helped to create a greater sense of community spirit.

New recruits for food warehouse

AN employment programme has helped 45 people secure jobs at Iceland's new Food Warehouse in Wolverhampton.

Iceland worked with the Wolves at Work scheme to recruit 50 staff for the shop at the Peel Centre, Stafford Street, set to open on March 13.

A total of 45 of the 50 retail assistant and night replenishment assistant roles have been filled by Wolverhampton residents. Of those, 27 were previously unemployed.

Road closure due to railway bridge work

A RAIL bridge will be repaired after an inspection found it was not meeting safety requirements.

The bridge over Parkfield Road in Stourbridge fails to meet loading capacity requirements and will now be strengthened, Dudley Council say.

The authority has put £75,000 towards the repair job which will result in the road being closed until April.

Cockroach found in restaurant meal

A RESTAURANT was found to be infested after a customer was served a cockroach in her meal.

Shanti Devi Sharma, director of the company which ran Isha's at Stourbridge Road, Lye, has been fined £9,000 after pleading guilty to nine offences under food safety and hygiene regulations.

Dudley magistrates heard that environmental health officers carried out an inspection of the restaurant, after receiving the customer's complaint following the incident last March.

They discovered cockroaches in the kitchen and beneath a chest freezer, which led to the restaurant's immediate closure. This was subsequently backed by a court order, which forced the closure of the business for six weeks until the infestation was eradicated.

The offences included failing to have adequate procedures in place to deal with pests and failing to keep the restaurant clean and in good repair.

Further offences related to dirty and damaged equipment, damaged floor coverings and damaged ceiling.

Magistrates fined 44-year-old Sharma, of Bath Meadow, Halesowen, £9,000 and order her to pay £909 costs and a £100 victim surcharge.

Councillor Peter Miller, cabinet member responsible for health and wellbeing, said afterwards: Conditions at this restaurant were appalling.

"The premises were immediately closed and remained so for several weeks until our environmental health officers were fully satisfied the problem had been dealt with and that there was no further risk to the health of the public"

Music college put back by more than two years

By David Cosgrove

A £31 million music institute planned for Brierley Hill will open three years later than originally scheduled, bosses have confirmed.

The 'Resonance' project at The Waterfront will not now welcome its first students until 2020.

The institute, to become the Black Country's music college, was originally due to open in September 2017 but last week chiefs said its opening date has been pushed back amid funding issues.

The college's backers are still seeking funding for the project, expected to create at least 43 jobs, with council bosses asked to stump up a £200,000 'bridging loan' by next January 'should alternative funding currently being investigated not materialise'.

Dudley Council's former regeneration boss Khurshid Ahmed said: "Any delay is disappointing and we need to get this up and running soon.

Vital

"It will improve the local area and I hope everything that can be done is done to make sure this vital project is completed as soon as possible."

David Barnard, co-director of Resonance, said: "There has been a very detailed due diligence process in terms of the funding but stars are beginning to align. We see Resonance launching in two phases. The first is the community phase and this will include staff recruitment activities in the community. The second phase will be the student intake and that is planned for 2020."

A council report states that the loan would be required to be in place by January 2019.

The campus will include a lecture theatre, classrooms, practice rooms, library, recording studios, radio station and live music venue. Resonance is being developed by charity BICMP.

Volunteers look for otters on Stour

Hannah Lewis, front, with volunteers looking for otters on the River Stour

VOLUNTEERS have been out across the region searching for otters as part of a wildlife survey.

The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country has been looking for the animals to find out how many are now living by our rivers.

Otter numbers have risen nationally and the trust is looking for see if that rise has been reflected locally on the River Stour.

Biodiversity and Planning Officer Hannah Lewis said: "Where there is evidence of otter populations we will know that the Stour is in good health, conversely absence of evidence will help us plan improvement works.

Healthy

"A healthy river is important for wildlife but for us too. Clean rivers mean clean rain and fewer pollutants in our food chain."

The project is part of Salmon in the Stour, a partnership between the Environment Agency, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and the Severn Rivers Trust, covering the whole of the River Stour catchment.

Once an important industrial watercourse, today the Stour acts as a vital 'green and blue corridor' bringing wildlife into the urban Black Country.

MPs fear 'vultures' target steel pensions

A MAJOR pensions mis-selling scandal has seen British Steel Pension Scheme (BSPS) members 'shamelessly bamboozled', say MPs.

The Work and Pensions Committee said it had received worrying evidence about financial advice provided to members of the BSPS, which includes hundreds in the Black Country.

While only a handful of steel industry sites remain – in Wednesfield, Wednesbury, Walsall and Brierley Hill – a decade ago there were a dozen employing more than a thousand people. Many of them are signed up to the British Steel Pension Scheme. Nationwide, the scheme still had 122,000 members last year.

But the committee says BSPS members had over the past year 'been exploited for cynical personal gain by dubious financial advisers in tandem with parasitical so-called introducers'.

Steelworkers yet to reach pension age were encouraged to transfer their defined benefit pension rights into a defined contribution pension, known as making a DB transfer. Such transfers may offer people readier access to cash and can be in the interests of people with a low life expectancy. But transferring away from a DB pension or a 'final salary' scheme is not usually in someone's interests, the committee said, as it means giving up generous and stable benefits in favour of a riskier investment.

The report states: "The circumstances surrounding the BSPS created perfect conditions for vultures to take advantage. Another major mis-selling scandal is already erupting."

Works mean rail closures at Easter

SERVICES on some of Britain's busiest rail routes will be suspended during the Easter weekend due to engineering work. More than 400 projects are to be carried out as part of a £118 million investment by Network Rail.

Passengers travelling between London and Scotland via the West Coast Main Line from March 31 to April 2 will be forced to use replacement buses between Glasgow and either Carlisle or Preston, depending on the day of travel. London Euston – the UK's fifth busiest station – will be closed on April 1 on the day before and after

The engineering projects will hamper the plans of many people hoping to take advantage of the four-day weekend. Network Rail says it schedules engineering work for bank holidays as there are fewer passengers.

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MP asks for CPS report on killing in night club

AN MP has written to the Government's Attorney General after a man accused of killing amateur footballer Ryan Passey was acquitted.

Kobe Murray, aged 19, of The Broadway, Dudley, walked free from court after being cleared of murder and manslaughter.

Mr Passey, 24, from Quarry Bank, died after being stabbed in the Chicago's nightclub in Stourbridge last August.

Stourbridge MP Margot James has now written to Attorney General Robert Buckland.

Mr Murray admitted stabbing the victim but said it happened accidentally as he went to push him away.

Conservative MP Ms James wrote: "I would like to request a full report from the Crown Prosecution Service that I might be able to share with Ryan's family.

"I would also be grateful if you could arrange for the investigating officer to meet Ryan's family so that they can discuss what actions may be available to them."

The Crown Prosecution Service has said it is unlikely more charges would be brought as Mr Murray has been cleared of any wrongdoing – unless compelling new evidence comes to light. A campaign to raise funds for any future legal costs has been suggested by friends of the family.

Murder case is going to retrial

THE jury has failed to reach a verdict in the trial of a man accused of fatally stabbing a father-of-two in a street fight in Brierley Hill.

Niron Parker-Lee, aged 20, of Blewitt Street, Pensnett, was charged with murdering Mansoor Mahmood, of Bague Walk, Brierley Hill, on the High Street on October 15, 2016, by stabbing him in the chest.

He has been on trial at Birmingham Crown Court but after six and a half hours deliberation the jury were unable to bring a majority verdict.

A retrial has been granted at the request of prosecuting counsel James Millington, QC, and a date provisionally set for July 16.

Parker-Lee has been remanded in custody until the retrial.

Fair at vineyard

A SPRING craft and gift fair is being held at Bobbington's Halfpenny Green Vineyard

There will be free admission to the event at the site off Tom Lane on March 24 from 11am to 4.30pm.

Boost for £27.8m light railway project

Artist's impression of innovation centre

AN AMBITIOUS bid to establish a light railway and innovation centre look set to receive a financial boost.

Dudley Council is working on plans to build a £27.8 million building at the bottom of Castle Hill.

The council is looking to release £90,000 funding through its captial budget for phase two.

Phase one of the project – which includes the innovation centre and a footbridge – is expected to be determined in the spring.

The money for phase two will be put towards an incubation centre housing eight small to medium start up businesses linked to the project.

The money is set to be released if it gets approved later this month.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for planning and economic development, said: "Very light rail is one of the key projects driving the regeneration of Dudley town centre.

"We want to support the project in every way we can to ensure its success.

"Although we are planning to stump up the cash for these initial costs for the second phase we are confident we will be able to recover these in the future.

"We know this project is high on the agenda and has widespread support from potential funding agencies."

The size of the incubation centre will be 6727sq ft. A specialist team will be established there to help businesses grow. The overall cost of phase two is set to be £3,000,000.

The project has been described by the council as a 'world class research, development and educational centre' which will focus on the creation of innovative Very Light Rail vehicles.

Ambulance boss worried over long delays at A&E

AMBULANCE crews had to wait more than an hour to hand over patients to A&E at Russells Hall Hospital on more than 450 occasions in a month.

The situation at the Dudley hospital in December had dramatically worsened.

In December last year, there were 458 instances when it took more than an hour for paramedics to drop off patients at the hospital. This compares with 151 in December 2016, and just three in December 2015.

The process of handing over a patient should take 15 minutes, according to the Government.

West Midlands Ambulance Service chief executive Anthony Marsh said the delays were putting the safe running of his organisation at risk. It means paramedics can be stuck at a hospital while an emergency incident requiring them takes place.

Russells Hall was not the only hospital in the Black Country where the handover of patients was badly delayed. At Walsall Manor there were 110 incidents of handovers taking more than an hour in December, but this was down from 160 the year before. There were 86 instances at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton and 14 at Sandwell General.

Report

In a report to the ambulance service board, Mr Marsh said: "Patient handover delays at hospital is the single biggest factor that jeopardises the delivery of a safe ambulance service for people in the West Midlands."

Karen Kelly, chief operating officer at the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We work closely with our colleagues at West Midlands Ambulance Service to make sure that patients who arrive by ambulance at A&E are assessed, treated and handed over as quickly and efficiently as possible.

"Those requiring urgent clinical attention are always given priority. Our turnaround times have improved greatly since December."

Dudley North MP Ian Austin blamed 'chronic underfunding' from the Conservative Government for Russells Hall being 'overstretched' .

Fans remember football hero

Manchester United fans with their 'Flowers of Manchester' flag at the service for Duncan Edwards

FOOTBALLING legend Duncan Edwards was honoured at his childhood church during a service attended by 100 people.

Duncan's relatives were joined by dozens of Manchester United fans, former Wolves player Mel Eves and dignitaries at St Francis Church in Laurel Road. The service on Sunday was held to mark the 60th anniversary of the Munich air disaster, which claimed the life of Duncan and seven of his Manchester United team-mates.

A speech was given by Rose Cook Monk, who launched the Duncan Edwards Foundation in memory of the Dudley-born United and England player. He died in hospital, aged 21, due to injuries sustained in the crash. A total of 23 died including officials, fans, journalists and air crew.

Prayers were led by Rev Joanna Anderson. The Manchester United fans presented the foundation with a cheque for £1,000.

NEWS IN BRIEF

New move for offices at depot

THE expansion of a council waste depot onto a playing field could start towards the end of the year, if amended plans get the go-ahead.

Dudley Council had decided to review proposals to build a three-storey office block and 200-space car park at Lister Road, following a backlash from dozens of residents and opposition from Dudley North MP Ian Austin.

An amended planning application will be submitted and, if it is approved, work will get under way before the end of the this year, a new report on the project revealed.

The scheme has sparked anger over the potential loss of green space.

Volunteers call for real ale festival

ORGANISERS of the annual Stourbridge Beer Festival are seeking volunteers to help with the event.

The Stourbridge and Halesowen branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (Camra) is holding the event in Stourbridge Town Hall from April 26 to 28. More than 100 beers will be featured.

The branch is urging Camra members in the region to sign up to help on the festival days and with setting up and taking down via www.stourbridgebeer fest.org.uk website.

There will also be a preview evening for Camra members on April 25.

Police action is urged on speeding

POLICE are being urged to act to cut speeding on a busy road.

A speed survey carried out on Tividale Road, Tipton, following complaints from residents, found 15 per cent of vehicles were travelling faster than 32mph.

Sandwell Council said West Midlands Police would now be approached to see if measures could be taken to enforce the speed limit.

The investigation was prompted by a petition signed by 155 people calling for action to tackle speeding on the busy route near Burnt Tree junction.

Tipped for top singer brings it back Ohm

A RISING star singer-songwriter is playing a free concert in his home city to launch his new single.

Alex Ohm will be in action at Newhampton Arts Centre in Wolverhampton on April 6 at 7.30pm. Alex has opened shows for the likes of Ian Brown and The Charlatans, Ocean Colour Scene and Peter Doherty

Tickets for the over-16s show are available from the centre in Dunkley Street on 01902 572090.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Handouts of £10k? Why it just won't work

A THOUGHT-provoking report by the Royal Society for the Arts suggests unemployment benefit, child benefit and tax credits should all be stopped, and instead everybody under the age of 55 should receive a one-off handout of £10,000.

Well, to be precise, it is actually proposing two payments of £5,000 each, which could be funded by new taxes on social media giants such as Facebook and Apple.

Now aside from the question about why the over-55s are excluded – discrimination surely? – the proposal will no doubt prove pretty popular with those who are eligible. An extra 10 grand in the back pocket, paid for by global fat cats? What's not to like?

While its title might suggest it is predominantly concerned with opera houses and art galleries, the RSA is actually a serious champion of social reform, with a distinguished history of coming up with radical ideas. Previous fellows include Charles Dickens, Benjamin Franklin, free-market economist Adam Smith and the, er Marxist, Karl Marx, so it encompasses a diverse range of intellectual talent. But while the idea will no doubt stimulate debate, you don't need to be Stephen Hawking – another former fellow – to see why it won't work.

When the Government starts doling out £10,000 bounties to all and sundry, the recipients will inevitably fall into two categories. There will be those who diligently take advice and carefully invest the money in a diverse portfolio of savings, stocks and shares, pensions, and insurance, knowing they may need something to call on for a rainy day.

Then there will be those who will go out and buy a giant flat-screen telly, the latest smartphone – probably made by one of the hated tech giants that the scheme was set up to target and an expensive games console. Next they will book a fortnight's holiday in Benidorm (keeping back a few hundred quid for lager, naturally). And if there's anything left at the end, it will be used as a down-payment to buy a new car on the never-never.

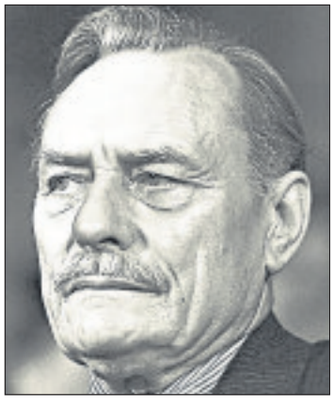
A few years down the line when it all goes pear-shaped, those who have put a bit away will find their investments have been eroded by inflation, not helped by the Government's decision to give everyone a 10-grand handout.

And those who wasted the money? Cue doleful pictures in sympathetic tabloids, and stories about life on the breadline because the Government stopped unemployment benefit, child benefit and tax credits.

Needs to be visible but out of reach of the wreckers

Steve Coogan – back as Alan Partridge. A masterpiece but beaten by The Trip

David Davis – caught up in the everyday haggling over the Brexit deal



Enoch Powell – would be wrong to say that we warmed to each other

I'm torn over push for Enoch plaque

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

I AM torn on this campaign to erect a blue plaque in Wolverhampton to commemorate the city's most significant MP, Enoch Powell. It would be a target for vandals, unless it could be placed somewhere in the city where it would be visible, but not visible enough to cause offence, and was well out of reach of wreckers. Pity they demolished the old Goodyear Chimney. I only interviewed Enoch Powell once. It would be wrong to say we warmed to each other.

A READER points out that, if you give the charity Water Aid £2 a month it can supply water to a family in scorching-dry Africa. So why does Severn-Trent demand £38 a month from him to do much the same in a country where, as he puts it, "it pees down with rain two days out of five on average?" Fair point.

BREXIT - An Everyday Story of Hagglers. In this week's episode M. Barnier says Britain must make up its mind what it wants. Mr Davis says, thanks, Michel, we'll have this. M. Barnier says, non, you cannot have that. Just like last week. Just like next week.

STEVE Coogan is returning to telly with a new series, This Time with Alan Partridge. We can expect another excellent slice of cringe-comedy. And yet, while Partridge is a comic masterpiece, for my money the best thing Coogan ever did was The Trip (2010-2014) in which he and Rob Brydon toured Northern England and Europe, allegedly reviewing restaurants for an upmarket Sunday newspaper. It was stressed that these were "fictionalised versions" of Coogan and Brydon, yet the insecurity and point-scoring of real-life thespians seemed genuine as they flirted with the staff and pitted their best Roger Moore and Sean Connery accents at each other over dinner. Brydon's conversation with one of the petrified corpses in Pompeii was one of the funniest things I've seen on telly, albeit it in very bad taste. So while it's good to see Partridge return, I'd rather see a new series of The Trip.

WE woke a few days ago to two depressingly familiar items of news. In Northern Ireland, time was yet again running out for a decision on forming a government. In Florida, kids were howling in grief after yet another American high-school massacre. The same old headlines keep coming around and it feels like living in a time-loop. Welcome to Groundhog Day.

COUNCIL tax looks set to rise. If the money is to be used for social care, who can complain? Yet doesn't it seem daft to bump council-tax bills up by £100 in April and give millions of us £100 back in winter-fuel allowance in November?

OUR changing language. Military terms once understood by millions of squaddies are a puzzle for Britain's younger generation. This explains a common error, as seen this week in a Daily Mail report about the unexploded device in London: "Navy divers work to diffuse massive 5ft long WWII bomb." Defuse, perhaps?

IN the great Peter Rabbit allergy debate, my sympathies are with the snowflakes. In a new animated film, Peter and his chums defeat their enemy Tom by pelting him with fruit to which he is allergic. A charity, Allergy UK, complained and took some flak on the lines of: "Oh, lighten up, snowflakes, it's only a joke. " And then we learned more about the scene. The fruit brings on such a violent allergic reaction that Tom falls to the ground choking and turning red before stabbing himself with his life-saving Epi-Pen. Not so funny after all, is it? I bet we all know kids whose lives are blighted by severe allergy and who must carry their Epi-Pen at all times. The remarkable thing is that apparently at no stage in the production did any script editors, animators or stars see anything wrong in making a joke about anaphylactic shock. Some parents have called for the scene to be re-shot, so here's an hilarious alternative. The rabbits trick Tom into wearing striped pyjamas and put him on a train to somewhere called Belsen. Oh, lighten up, snowflakes, it's only a joke . . . .

GOOD news. My long-term holiday haunt of Beer in Devon did not win Channel 4's Village of the Year competition. That honour went to Broughshane in County Antrim which I dare say will become a seething trippers' honeypot, allowing Beer to slip back into unjam-packed serenity.

TALKING POINT

Turn-off as television is awash with soaps

SOME wives say they are golfing widows. Me, I'm a TV soaps widower.

Trouble is, while husbands disappear off to the par fours and, no doubt, soak up the atmosphere at the 19th hole, I'm stuck next to 'er indoors, being subjected to whatever minor, or major disaster has befallen one of the characters in Corrie, Emmerdale etc.

You used to know where you stood with what are now termed 'serial dramas', they were on one or two nights a week, one half hour at a time. That's to say, it was only 24 minutes or so, per night of dross to suffer, perhaps once or twice during the week....

Not now – double-length episodes, or the dreaded "We'll be back in Weatherfield in half an hour."

And another thing. Conversation. If you do want to say something during the course of an episode, (I mean, how dare you), women – so-called experts of multi-tasking – press live pause on the remote. Oh no, there's no truck with actually talking in response and keeping a watchful eye on the programme – after all they might miss the nuance of a furrowed brow, or a pantomime grimace, or staring into space before the advert break.

I mean, really, could the acting get any worse? One bloke in Emmerdale is obviously an expert in crying, as that's all he does. Impressive, but surely there's something lacking in emotional range.

Then you've got Gail Platt's hairdresser son in Corrie – the perpetual frowner. I thought I was miserable, but he takes the biscuit!

But getting back to the live pause, when it is pressed, it's like a little part of me dies inside, as I know it will prolong the agony, as it takes even longer to watch!

Still, it could be worse, I mean there could be 20 backed-up episodes of Jeremy Kyle on the planner. Oh no, wait a minute, there are! So on the off chance that there is not a soap being shown, I get the delights of Shane and Demi's convoluted love-life being prodded and probed by Jezzer in front of a highly amused audience.

I now know why they show decent films late at night on the box, it's for long-suffering fools like me who, after Pointless, Eggheads and maybe the news, don't get a look-in for the rest of the evening until their partner is in the land of nod.

Perhaps I'll start knitting, or maybe even, go out? Nah, I'll just suffer in silence, if only so she doesn't press the pause button again!

GRAEME ANDREW

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Missed opportunity at accident blackspot

AFTER a long wait for something to be done, the traffic department of Dudley Council has eventually stirred into action over the accident blackspot on the junction of Gospel End Street and Vicar Street in Sedgley. There are an average of seven accidents per year at this junction – and that's just those that are notified to the council.

Alas it looks like the main cause of accidents has been ignored – vehicles travelling too fast up the hill at Gospel End Street and rounding the bend into Vicar Street, colliding with vehicles emerging from Gospel End Street..

Plans for the works appeared in Sedgley Library on the Saturday before roadworks began on Monday morning, making a mockery of public consultation. The council excused themselves by claiming the measures are 'interim' and as such do not merit public discussion. 'Rumble strips' have been laid to slow down vehicles coming from the Bull Ring, but this isn't the main cause of collision.

Although they are unpopular with motorists, speed bumps are the only way to slow vehicles down rounding the corner into Vicar Street. The bumps in School Road Wombourne outside Benedict Biscop School are a good example of their effective use.

They are due to realign the junction between Gospel End Street and Bush Bank but the problem of speed on the main thoroughfare will remain and it's unlikely to reduce collisions.

This is a huge missed opportunity and waste of valuable resources. Motorists would be well advised to exercise great caution at the junction and lobby for speed bumps to be installed.

MARTIN JONES
Sedgley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Dudley Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL
dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Solution for congestion at hospital

I had to go to Russells Hall Hospital on Tuesday afternoon. I travelled from the Merry Hill centre direction. When we got to the Holly Hall traffic lights the traffic was at a standstill.

At peak times this entrance into the hospital car park just won't take the sheer volume of traffic. In my opinion a simple solution would solve it.

It needs a second access further towards Pensnett. It just needs the construction of an access to the car park and presumably a barrier. This would take pressure off this bottleneck island.

When we got to this roundabout it took a further 20 minutes to get into the car park. We finally parked and when we came out of the hospital two hours later, had the same problem trying to get out of the car park.

Working out how much money they are pulling in every day, it would be easy to sort out this problem.

BOB WHITEHOUSE
Kingswinford

Playing a blinder to save 1930s theatre

WHY knock down a 1930s theatre so close to where the hit TV show Peaky Blinders is filmed? Tickets for this year's Peaky Blinders nights at Black Country Living Museum sold out in 15 minutes, yet Dudley Council want to knock down the 1930s Hippodrome building a stone's throw away from the museum.

Surely it makes more sense to hop on the Peaky Blinders bandwagon and reopen the Hippodrome as part of the Peaky Blinders museum theme. Peaky theme nights at an authentic 1930s Hippodrome would help the attract tourists to the area creating jobs and prosperity.

GE FANTHOM
Swindon

Don't be sentimental for eyesore

I read last week that supporters to reopen Dudley Hippodrome have "worked really hard on the project" and that campaigners will now try to get listed status for the former theatre to protect it from demolition.

I count about 23 people protesting for it to be saved on the photo last week, it hasn't got the support from the majority of Dudley folk!

Most people who have signed to save it probably did so out of sentimentality. However, the building is a shocking disgrace, it's an eyesore that is blighting a marvellous castle. Even with a million pounds spent on it, it will still look like a brick box from three sides and maybe half presentable from the front.

Please could those involved use their energy on worthwhile projects. Let this die gracefully, the memories are far better than any promises in the future.

MR LEE
Holly Hall

Important information about your TV signal

Freeview TV signals are being updated in this area over the coming weeks. You may need to retune your TV equipment to restore any missing channels.

Look out for messages on your TV screen.

Other terrestrial services that offer Freeview channels such as **YouView**, **BT TV** and **TalkTalk** will also be affected. Satellite and cable TV are not affected.

The changes are required by the UK Government to free up airwaves for future mobile broadband services.

For more information and to check if you're affected visit **www.freeview.co.uk/tvchanges** or call the Freeview Advice Line free on **0808 100 0288**.

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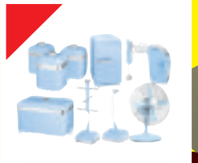
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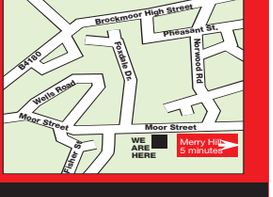

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Rally of unity to prove 'Rivers of Blood' wrong

IAN Austin will host an anti-racism rally to mark the 50th anniversary of Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech – and to celebrate a better Britain.

The Dudley North MP will host the event at Birmingham's Burlington Hotel – formerly the Midland Hotel – which is where Powell delivered his incendiary speech at a Conservative Association meeting on April19, 1968.

Mr Austin says he is inviting a number of as yet unnamed 'high profile speakers' from across the country to address the rally. He hopes that 'hundreds of people will come together to celebrate how Britain has got better over the last 50 years'.

Mr Austin said: "This was a shameful speech that caused great division, presented a terrible image of the Black Country and even resulted in people being attacked.

Skin

"Powell divided communities based on the colour of people's skin, he wanted immigrants to leave the country and predicted race wars and blood on the streets. His terrible predictions have never become true. Instead, the West Midlands is home to communities in which people from different countries, backgrounds and cultures work and live together harmoniously.

"People from all over the world have made a huge contribution to community life, to our NHS and other public services and, by setting up businesses and creating jobs, our economy too – so I'm inviting speakers from across the country and people from around the region to join me as we celebrate all the ways Britain has got better over the last 50 years. Let's celebrate how Britain has got better, not commemorate division," said the Labour MP.

Dudley North MP Ian Austin plans an anti-racism rally on the anniversary

Enoch Powell made his Rivers of Blood speech in April 1968 in Birmingham

Powell was the Conservative MP for Wolverhampton South West from 1950 to 1974. In the controversial speech he referred to a conversation he claimed to have had with a constituent, who told him that mass immigration into Britain would eventually see 'the black man have the whip hand over the white man'.

He concluded that failing to address the issue of immigration would be 'the great betrayal'.

Mr Austin's announcement comes after the Wolverhampton's Civic and Historical Society announced it had received an application to erect a plaque to Enoch Powell, who died in 1998, from an unnamed person.

Classical scholar Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' reference is an allusion to a line from Virgil's Aeneid. He said: "As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood."

The society's panel is set to decide next year if the plaque gets the go-ahead. Mr Austin's event takes place at 6pm on April 19 at the Burlington Hotel, New Street.

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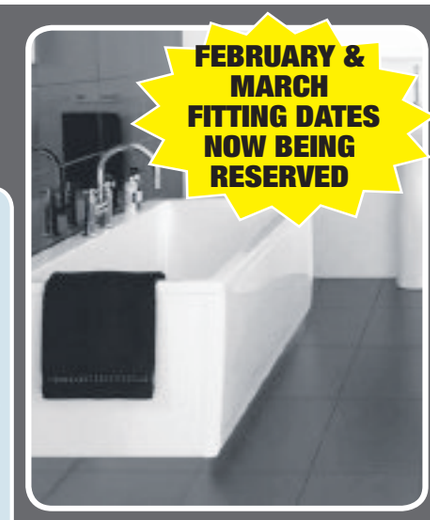

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Trendy Fiat models are targeted by car thieves

THIEVES are targeting souped-up version of a trendy modern classic – the Fiat Abarth 595.

Nine of the vehicles, a performance model of the Fiat 500 and priced from £17,000, were stolen in the Black Country in January.

Another standard Fiat 500 was taken from a property in Stafford. Many victims said their vehicles were taken without keys or smashed glass.

Police recently highlighted the use of relay devices that push signals from electronic car keys to vehicles parked outside. Thieves have made use of the high-tech gadgets to steal valuable cars without having to force entry.

West Midlands Police confirmed nine Abarths 595s had been stolen in the Black Country in the first month of this year.

Nine Abarths were stolen in January

Steve and Denise Scotts, of Stafford

Simone and David Beebee, of Wednesbury, had their Fiat 595 Abarth stolen

Appeal

They were taken in Walsall, Oldbury, Halesowen, Smethwick, Stourbridge, Brierley Hill, Tipton, Dudley and Wednesbury.

Simon Williams, spokesman for the RAC Foundation, said the appeal of the high-powered Abarth 595 may mean criminals were stealing them to order. He said: "Owners need to take extra precautions, while police need to clamp down on vehicle thefts."

Dave and Simone Beebee had their navy blue Abarth stolen from their driveway in Ellway Street in Wednesbury in the early hours of January 29.

The vehicle was bought only two months earlier from an Arnold Clark dealership in Oldbury and had just over 500 miles on the clock.

When it was stolen the keys were still inside their house. Mr Beebee said: "It all seems too much of a coincidence."

Kate Darke's vehicle was stolen from her address in Stourbridge Road in Dudley sometime between midnight on January 13 and midday the following day. It was recovered on January 28 and is undergoing forensic analysis. In December, Stephen and Denise Scotts, of Witney Road in Stafford, had their Fiat 500 stolen from their drive.

Justin Westnedge, from Abarth UK, said: "The Abarth 595 is being constantly upgraded for safety and security."

A West Midlands Police spokesman said the crimes were not thought to be linked. Call 101 with information.

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FENSA

Family shop ransacked in £20,000 burglary

A FAMILY-RUN cycles and toy shop is devastated after burglars stole stock worth £20,000 and caused thousands of pounds in damage.

Raiders ransacked BD Price Ltd in Sedgley over the weekend after breaking in through the back door.

Shop owner Dan Price said: "I'm devastated at what has happened. They pulled off the shutters at the back and jimmied the rear doors open. They smashed the alarm and took about 60 bikes and a lot of expensive toys and left the shop in absolute chaos. What they didn't take they emptied out of boxes and chucked in piles."

The family business has been based in Sedgley for more than 100 years. Mr Price is the fourth generation to run the shop.

He discovered the burglary after opening his shop on Monday morning, February 12. It had been closed since the previous Saturday evening. Shutters and the alarm system were damaged.

Around sixty bikes were stolen alongside toy sets from such brands as as Lego and Playmobil. The stolen stock was worth around £20,000, while burglars caused around £2,000 of damage, said Mr Price.

Police have launched an investigation into the burglary and forensic experts visited the scene. The shop has been targeted in the past.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "We were called at 9.10am on Monday to reports of a burglary at BD Price Ltd, High Holborn, Sedgley. This is believed to have happened sometime between 5pm on Saturday and Monday morning. Forensic investigators were immediately sent out to gather vital evidence.

"We would like to reassure the business owner that this is an active enquiry and we are working hard to identify and apprehend those responsible. Anyone with information can contact West Midlands Police on 101 quoting log 464 of 12/02/2018."

Dan Price, owner of BD Price toy and cycle shop, next to the area left empty after bikes were stolen

Benefits cheat has avoided prison after paying money back

A BENEFITS cheat from Dudley, who pocketed more than £15,000 in employment support despite the fact he owned a second home, has been spared an immediate jail sentence.

Mohammed Hussain, of Lupin Road, failed to mention he had bought a home costing £70,000 in Watsons Green, which he was renting out for £125 per week, when applying for employment support.

Recorder Abigail Nixon at Wolverhampton Crown Court told Hussain that he was only avoiding jail time due to the fact he had already paid back the full amount he owed and had no previous convictions.

Recorder Nixon said: "You have expressed remorse, which I see as genuine, you have repaid the amount in full, and you play a central role in the care of your children.

"Your children would suffer from your imprisonment."

Fifty-two-year-old Hussain, of Lupin Road, had been charged for making a false statement to claim benefits. Hussain has paid back the full amount of £15,028.

Hussain's to 36 week prison sentence was suspended for a year.

He must also carry out 100 hours of unpaid work over a 12 month period.

Thief who broke a woman's leg is jailed

A THIEF who broke a woman's leg when fleeing from a filling station after stealing fuel and food has been jailed for 18 months.

Leesa Wise reversed a stolen car without looking, breaking the left leg of Ms Jami Charalmbous, who was standing next to another car in a parking bay.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that the victim was crushed between two vehicles as the stolen Nissan Note, with the 35-year-old defendant at the wheel, struck the other vehicle so hard it shunted it forward at the BP Service Station in New Birmingham Road, Tividale.

By John Scott

Wise, formerly of Aziz Isaac Close, Oldbury, who had 29 previous convictions involving 79 separate offences, was not linked to the theft of the Nissan but she was captured on CCTV stealing £27 worth of fuel and food valued at £38 from the shop, said Mr Howard Searle, prosecuting.

Warrant

The defendant was on bail for another offence and had a warrant out for her arrest when the incident happened at 7.45am on April 30.

"She got into the stolen vehicle and drove off in such a hurry she paid no attention to the vehicle behind her," explained Mr Searle. "It was obvious a collision had taken place but the defendant drove off without stopping, without any consideration for the victim."

The victim's leg was fractured just below the knee and she had to wear a full leg brace for six weeks following the incident, which also left her with tendon and nerve damage.

The court heard that Wise was a 'regular dishonest offender' who had been offered 'numerous' opportunities to reform her behaviour.

Mr Niall Skinner, defending, said: "By far the worst element of this was that she drove off. She accepts that she could, and should, have stayed to help, call an ambulance and so on. But she was not thinking straight, a state she had been in for 15 years while living the life of a hapless class A drug addict.

"This is the first time somebody has been badly hurt as a result of her behaviour and it has made her determined to change her lifestyle."

Wise, now of Slade Road, Erdington, admitted causing serious injury by dangerous driving, theft, making off without payment and driving with neither insurance nor a valid licence.

Cambodia trip

A 15-year-old school student will be jetting off to Cambodia in July to work for a charity. Alexander Markham, who studies at Bishop Milner, is volunteering for charity Camps International. He will be working with communities to build wells and develop schools.

He is holding a coffee morning and book sale to help fund his trip. It's at Central Methodist Church in Cross Street, Dudley, on Saturday from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

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JAWS roars into action

JAWS, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

FIRST up, Synthetic Recipe kept their mates happy with covers of songs by Fall Out Boy, Nirvana, Neck Deep and Green Day, but their closing song, an original entitled Method In The Madness, suggests they have a future beyond covers.

You can catch them on tomorrow night (Friday) at the Slade Rooms with Blick Black and the Chilliholers, Mayo and Override.

Tinned Astronaut went down a treat with an enthusiastic mosh pit thanks to their sudden gear changes and hard rock crescendos. New song Silver Tongue was an instant hit with the crowd but the biggest response was for Upsetty Spaghetti. George Smith is a confident frontman with probably Wolverhampton's best unsigned band.

Headliners JAWS come from Birmingham but this was a rare gig for them in Wolverhampton and singer/guitarist Connor Schofield was sporting a vintage Wolves top to mark the occasion. This outfit, formed at Halesowen College six years ago, after two albums stand shoulder to shoulder with more widely known bands like The 1975, Bombay Bicyle Club and Foals.

With their name literally up in lights behind them, JAWS oozed class with a funky rock sound festooned with chiming guitars. They opened with the dream pop of Surround You followed by recent single Cast from album Simplicity. They upped the pace for a high-energy finish with Just A Boy, Be Slowly and Gold, the song matching his shirt.

Shrek (Steffan Harri) wakes Princess Fiona (Laura Main) Photo: Helen Maybanks

Ogre to Shrek's place for laugh-a-minute musical

REVIEWS
by Leon Burakowski

Shrek The Musical, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

OGRE the top and monstrously funny, Shrek The Musical is laugh-a-minute family fun. The DreamWorks animated movie hit, which was transformed into a Broadway and West End show, is back on stage in Birmingham and provides the ideal half-term treat.

The children in the audience delighted in the slapstick comedy, colourful costumes and special effects, whilst the grown-ups could chuckle at a witty script packed with digs at fairy tale conventions, occasional innuendo and surreal dance routines.

The story revolves around grumpy ogre Shrek and his quest to rescue the Princess Fiona. In return height-challenged tyrant Lord Farquaad promises to allow back into his kingdom of Duloc an assortment of fairy tale charactersthat were forced to become squatters in Shrek's swamp after their eviction. Along the way the big green fellow reluctantly accepts a talking donkey as his travelling companion.

Musical theatre fans can tick off cheeky references to famous musicals, including Wicked, Chicago, The Lion King and Les Miserables. This touring production has a cast that can really deliver the songs. Steffan Harri is in fine voice as our rotund hero. Laura Main is a fabulously feisty Princess Fiona, more than holding her own in a flatulence contest with Shrek – that scene is a big hit with the kids. Both are almost upstaged by Marcus Ayton as an ee-awesome Donkey, a singing dancing ass with sass.

Most laughs come from Samuel Holmes as the short-tempered Farquaad, scuttling across the stage and doing the most outrageous comic tricks with his little legs. The actor is not three and half feet tall so one can assume he has sore knees by the end of the performance.

With a theme about acceptance of diversity and Shrek's poignant line that beautiful doesn't have to mean pretty, this is a feel good show with its heart in the right place. It ends in party mood with the audience joining the cast in a rendition of I'm A Believer. If you liked the movie, you'll love this show. Shrek is at the Alex until Sunday, February 25.

Firm will stay after traveller fears eased

BOSSES at a distribution firm have said they are 'reassured' a new temporary travellers transit site will not impact business.

Commercial Body Fittings in Coseley has now lodged expansion plans with Dudley Council which could see 40 jobs created.

The firm's managing director Mark Negri had previously suggested CBF, which employs 30 people at its base in Budden Road, might be forced to move as a result of the transit site being created nearby. But after a meeting with Dudley Council leader Patrick Harley, bosses have been convinced the transit site will not have a negative impact on their business.

The transit site in Budden Road is being created because its existence will make it easier for the council to move on illegal encampments across the borough. It currently costs the council £150,000 a year in clean-up operations and legal fees to move them on. Adopting a transit site will give the authority increased powers.

Mr Negri said: "It was pleasing that the leader of the council contacted us directly. We have been reassured sufficiently to commit to staying here and to press ahead with our exciting expansion plans."

So whoo's your friend Minister?

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson admire one of the owls

WHAT a hoot! Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson met up with volunteers from the World Owl Trust and some feathered friends. The South Staffordshire MP, who is a member and patron of the trust, popped into its temporary home.

The Kinver MP visited Rodbaston Animal Zone at South Staffordshire College, where 70 owls are being temporarily homed at the site until the trust's new base at Himley Park has been built.

Delays with historical excavations being carried out on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Building Trust mean an opening date for the new site has yet to be set. Volunteers are hopeful it will be operational by next spring .

Alan Pearce, chairman of the board of trustees, said: "Even with his very demanding parliamentary job which takes up a lot of his time, Gavin is very supportive in his role as a patron of the World Owl Trust."

Mr Williamson said: "I am always so impressed to hear how hard volunteers work to care for the owls and I was pleased to hear that progress is being made at the new site in Himley Park."

Hundreds more school places being created

HUNDREDS of school places will be created after Sandwell Council chiefs backed plans for a new primary and expansion of a secondary school.

The primary school in Smethwick will create 420 new places while plans to make Q3 Academy in Oldbury bigger will also create capacity for hundreds more students.

The primary is planned for part of the existing Shireland Collegiate Academy site and nearby land in Wilson Road.

Bosses said it will eventually cater for 420 pupils and 'ensure the demand for extra school places is met'. Estimated costs for the 'state-of-the-art' school are likely to be around £4.5 million and it is set to open in September next year.

Sandwell Council was approached by the Government to build the primary school and will work on behalf of the Education, Skills and Funding Agency with the Collegiate Academy Trust, who already run Shireland Collegiate Academy in Smethwick, rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

£23 per person – how cycling 'could ease burden of obesity'

NEW research shows it could cost as little as £23 per person to ease the burden of treating obesity illnesses in the West Midlands.

Every year the NHS spends around £5.1bn treating illnesses directly attributable to obesity – which equates to around £77 per person in the UK.

But a cycling development project run by Cycling UK, and funded by the Department for Transport, resulted in 18,500 people cycling more regularly last year – for a cost of only £23.81 per person. The DfT has announced it will be funding the Big Bike Revival project for a fourth year with a £500,000 grant.

Paul Tuohy, chief executive of Cycling UK, said: "The Big Bike Revival represents incredible value for money, and I'm delighted that the Department for Transport has recognised the significance of the project by funding it for another year so we can get more people cycling every day.

"It's not only the health benefits. More people cycling can only have a positive impact on our environment. Every year, it's estimated that air pollutions costs the UK economy up to £10 billion."

Justin time for more Timberlake tickets

AMERICAN pop superstar Justin Timberlake has added an extra Birmingham date to the UK leg of his The Man Of The Woods Tour this summer.

Tickets go on sale at 9am tomorrow (Friday) for JT's second consecutive concert at the city centre venue on June 28.

There has been huge demand for tickets to see the Tennessee-born singer who had hits with Can't Stop the Feeling! and SexyBack. He released his fourth studio album, Man Of The Woods, earlier this month and performed in front of a massive global audience as the halftime act during the American Super Bowl final.

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The teams and Anna's family line-up before the game at Lye Town on Sunday, which raised £6,000 Photos: Tim Sturgess

Baggie Bird helped a linesman

Lee Naylor with his eyes on the ball

Rob Edwards in action

Jody Craddock takes a breather and chats with supporters

All Stars are in action to help Isla

AN ALL-STAR football team turned out for a charity match at Lye Town FC and raised £6,000 to help fund cancer treatment for a two-year-old girl.

Ex-Wolves players Joleon Lescott, Jody Craddock and Lee Naylor were among the pros that turned out for West Midlands All Stars against Dormston School Old Boys match.

Some 500 people turned out to watch the game on Sunday and help pay for Isla Austin to fly to America for treatment.

She is in remission but it is hoped the new treatment will help stop her from getting cancer again. Youngsters with neuroblastoma – the same disease which tragic young Sunderland fan Bradley Lowery suffered from – have a 50 per cent chance of a relapse

Her mother Anna, aged 37, who went to Dormston School in Sedgley, said: "She was diagnosed with cancer on her first birthday. She had chemotherapy, a stem cell transplant, radiotherapy and seven and a half hour operation in surgery.

"But now she has been given the all clear which is brilliant. To get on this trial you have to be all clear. She has a 50 per cent chance of re-lapsing and after that a 10 per cent survival chance.

"The clinical trial is supposed to help reduce the chances of re-lapsing. It has shown good results and lot's of children are going for it.

"As a parent you have to do everything you can for your child and this is our only option."

The cost of the trip will be £155,000. Anna has been supported by family and friends in reaching the target.

She plans to fly out to New York this week to the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. The charity football match helped to raise the final total needed.

The West Midlands All Stars, managed by former Wolves goalkeeper Matt Murray, who is a friend of Isla's family, won 5-1. Other star names included Rob Edwards, Mo Camara, James Chambers, Dele Adebola and Deon Burton. Anna's husband Rick, 39, turned out for the opposition.

Murray, who lived with Anna's aunt and uncle from 1997 to 2003 in Penn, after leaving school, helped to organise the game and bring in the pros.

Anna added: "I want to thank everyone for their support.

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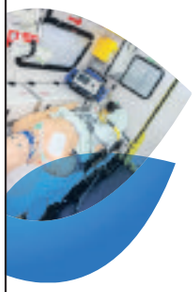

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Health Futures University Technical College (UTC), based on High Street, West Bromwich, prepares students aged 14 – 19 for a range of health-related careers that span the NHS, public health, public sector agencies, private industries, voluntary, charitable and community organisations – locally, nationally and across the globe.

Why chose Health Futures UTC?

A spokesman said: "We are able to offer educational experiences and opportunities that are rarely seen in traditional schools and colleges. We have a fully functioning simulation ward which allows our pupils to participate in Technical Challenge Projects.

Exciting

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"Each TCP is delivered through exciting partnerships that have been formed with health, education and public sector organisations such as West Midlands Ambulance Service, The Military, Baby Futures, West Midlands Fire Service and West Midlands Police.

"These partnerships allow Health Futures students to enjoy academic and career-focused advantages that will prepare them for both higher education and employment; gaining nationally-recognised qualifications alongside hands-on project learning with healthcare professionals.

"We are now accepting applications from young people living in Birmingham, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Solihull who would like to join us as Year 10 or Year 12 students in September 2018."

If you are interested in pursuing a career in healthcare, you are invited to come along to the open evening to find out more about how studying with Health Futures UTC could prepare you for an exciting career. The open evening takes place on Tuesday, February 27 between 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

Students learning to read a medical chart in order to track the patient's vital signs in the Sim Ward

Anti-terror chief facing axe over lost documents

A DISCIPLINARY panel has ruled the West Midlands' top counter-terrorism officer should be sacked for gross misconduct over the theft of top secret documents from his car.

The paperwork was stolen from the boot of Assistant Chief Constable Marcus Beale's car last May.

Mr Beale, 54, left the documents in a briefcase in his car boot while he visited the pub, went for a weekend away to London with his wife – leaving the car parked at Birmingham International train station – and went supermarket shopping.

Mr Beale was given the documents on May 10, and placed them in his car before noticing them missing five days later at a service station while en route to Oxford. There is even some suggestion that the car had been left unlocked.

ACC Marcus Beale

Chief Constable Dave Thompson

The car containing the documents was parked at Birmingham Airport

Organised

The briefcase contained four documents, including minutes from a high-level counter-terror meeting, counter-terrorism local profiles, details of regular organised crime and highly sensitive information about a high-profile investigation.

The loss of the paperwork, which has never been recovered, could have been 'catastrophic' according to a legal counsel for West Midlands Police.

The panel found Mr Beale had committed gross misconduct and recommended he be dismissed.

The final decision over what happens to Mr Beale, expected in March, now lies with West Midlands Chief Constable Dave Thompson.

Last year Mr Beale, aged 54, and due to retire in April, pleaded guilty to failing to safeguard information under the Official Secrets Act at magistrates court and was fined £3,500.

"The document should never have been in the briefcase of that car, not for minutes, let alone days, said Fiona Barton QC, counsel for West Midlands Police at the hearing held in Birmingham. "The impact of the loss could have been catastrophic. It is a matter of luck that the document does not appear to have seen the light of day."

Corinna Ferguson, chairman of the panel, said it was a mystery how and when the documents were taken.

John Beggs, counsel for Mr Beale, said his client was unaware of the sensitivity of the documents, saying he would have acted differently if he knew.

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Limestone mines 'best told story' in tourism awards

A BLACK Country visitor attraction has been awarded a top accolade in a national competition.

The Dudley Canal Tunnel & Limestone Mines won in the Best Told Story category in the VisitEngland's Accolades.

The attraction, which is run by the Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, was the only one in the Black Country to win an award with the rest in the region Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent.

Among them was BBC Tours in Birmingham, Trentham Gardens near Stoke-on-Trent and Cadbury World in Birmingham.

There are 86 attractions to receive accolades, highlighting all aspects of the overall visitor experience from story-telling to food and drink and from customer service to overall winners.

The attractions have achieved these accolades based on the score they obtained following their annual assessment by VisitEngland.

VisitEngland Director Andrew Stokes said: "These attractions offer a warm welcome, high quality food and drink and unparalleled customer service and rightly deserve these accolades."

The Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Mines under Dudley have won a top tourism award

Higher waste bill for places of worship

CHURCHES and mosques could be charged more for rubbish collections under new council cost-saving plans in Dudley.

Businesses would also be hit by the proposals to increase fees for collections across the borough by up to five per cent.

Dudley Council has revealed higher refuse fees which it is proposing to bring in from April. It would be the second hike in 12 months by the borough council for rubbish collections. Bosses say the increases are necessary due to rising costs.

Churches and mosques would be hit with a two per cent rise. The fee for a 240 litre bin would go up from £1.20 to £1.22 under the plans. A 660-litre bin from £5.92 to £6.04, a 950-litre bin from £7.68 to £7.83, while a 1,100-litre bin will cost £8.69, up from £8.52.

Meanwhile, businesses face being charged £53.63 to have up to 10 bags of rubbish picked up, up from £51.07.

Free heroin scheme is branded 'ludicrous'

RADICAL plans to give drug addicts free heroin on the NHS have polarised opinion – with critics saying the scheme was akin to police 'waving the white flag'.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has put forward the controversial proposal to allow doctors to prescribe heroin to addicts who fail to respond to other treatment.

By Peter Madeley

Readers of The Chronicle's sister newspaper, the Express & Star, have voted overwhelmingly against it, with around 68 per cent of more than 6,000 respondents to an online poll opposing the measure.

West Midlands UKIP MEP Bill Etheridge, who is also a Sedgley councillor, described the plan as 'utterly ludicrous', saying it was evidence that the police had given up on trying to stop crime.

Mr Jamieson's plan forms part of a wide-ranging policy that includes providing rooms for addicts to inject heroin and installing drug testing areas in clubs and bars.

It has received widespread support from professionals and experts working in the field, who argue that treatment, rather than prison, is the best strategy to reduce crime.

Lord Ramsbotham, co-chair of the drugs, alcohol and justice cross-party Parliamentary group, claimed the scheme would take addicts out of the criminal justice system.

Baroness Molly Beacher, co-chair of the all-party Parliamentary group for drug policy reform, said the proposals had 'identified the idiocy of current UK drugs policy which wastes billions of pounds on the criminal justice system, and fails communities and vulnerable people'.

Featherstone Prison Governor Babafemi Dada said: "This will help reduce numbers of victims and give hope to those who have had to deal with the impact of drug use."

Dr Bill Strange, chair of Birmingham Local Medical Committee, which represents more than 600 GPs in the city, said he supported plans to establish drug consumption rooms.

But Mr Etheridge was not convinced. He said: "This utterly ludicrous idea shows what the modern day British police force has come to. They find it too difficult to track down and arrest criminals so instead they wave the white flag and start giving them the illegal things they want in the first place."

Comedy show started in a refugee camp

COMEDIAN and activist Mark Thomas is one part of a comic trio in his latest production, Showtime From The Frontline, which is coming to the MAC at Cannon Hill Park in Edgbaston.

The socialist comic has been getting five-star reviews for his collaboration with Faisal Abualheja and Alaa Shehada, from the Jenin Freedom Theatre, which tells of when he set up a comedy club in a refugee camp.

Mark Thomas said: "We believe we have created a joyous, uplifting and unique production that places the voices of young Palestinians centre stage."

It will be staged at the Birmingham venue from Wednesday to Saturday, February 28 to March 3, at 8pm. Go to macbirmingham.co.uk for tickets or call 0121 446 3232.

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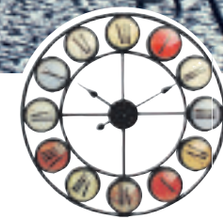

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From left, Cliff Easthope, Steve Furnival, Graham Page, and Reg Smith

Reg Smith is in the middle in this shot taken in Singapore in 1959

Reg Smith, right, during his time in Singapore in 1959

Cliff, third left, Reg, fourth left, and Graham, second from right

Memories – in perfect line-up on parade

Forces friendship shaped us for the rest of our lives

A FRIENDSHIP formed six decades ago during National Service has stood the test of time.

The group was thrown together for eight weeks of training at Whittington Barracks back in 1958, and have never looked back, marking 60 years as pals with a meal out at the Broadway pub, Lichfield Road, New Invention.

'It shaped us for the rest of our lives.' Sixty years down the line, that is how four friends who met doing National Service summed up their training.Reg Smith, of Bilston, Graham Page, of Kingswinford, Cliff Easthope, of Tipton, and Steve Furnival, who lives in Stoke, were just 19 when they got to know each other.

They spent time in post-war Germany and then the Far East together.

Report by David Cosgrove

Mr Easthope said: "We all first met up in February 1958 in Lichfield, that's where we started our training.

"I remember getting off the train from Tipton or Wolverhampton and Steve got off the train coming from Stoke.

Names

"The sergeant shouted our names out and we got onto a lorry together and we've been mates ever since. I wouldn't have changed it for anything. And I think everyone would say that it helped them in life."

After nearly two months of training, the four pals joined up with the South Staffordshire Regiment's First Battalion proper – Mr Easthope and Mr Furnival in A Company and Mr Page and Mr Smith in C Company.

They travelled to Germany and were stationed in Luneburg until October before returning home. However, on their return in late 1958 the North and South Staffs Regiments amalgamated to become the Staffordshire Regiment.

The new combined regiment consisted of active soldiers only so those doing National Service were forced to move to another unit. Needing to serve another year to complete their training, the quartet were transferred to the Cheshire Regiment, and sent to the Far East.

They spent around a year in Singapore and Malaya – helping keep the peace during elections in the former which saw Singapore vote to self-govern for the first time.

Retired odd job man Mr Smith, 79, said: "It's good looking back, but you never realised at the time how good a time it was. It definitely shaped me for the rest of my life. I think I would've been a bit different without the discipline we got right from the start of our training. We had discipline because of our National Service and that's what people lack today."

Mr Furnival, also 79, worked as a primary school teacher for 20 years before his retirement. He said: "They used to call me 'Jock' because I was from Stoke and they were all from the Black Country.

Travelled

"I remember the first day well. We pulled into Lichfield Trent Valley station and the first bloke I met was Cliff, and he helped me get onto the truck.

"Training was normally six weeks but we did eight weeks because there was a short break for Easter."

Mr Furnival left as a full corporal, and his colleagues all Privates. The four have remained close and have travelled abroad with their wives who are also now friends.

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The King and I

The critically acclaimed production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's The King and I will be coming to the London Palladium this summer for a limited time only!

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Mile for Joel is charity's new keep fit initiative

Youngsters taking part in the new 'A Mile for Joel' initiative that has been launched in the Black Country

A NEW fitness challenge has been launched by a Black Country charity which was set up in memory of three terror victims.

'A Mile for Joel' sees youngsters urged to complete one mile of exercise – whether it is walking, running, swimming, cycling or any other activity.

The initiative has been organised by Smile for Joel, a charity set up to honour Joel Richards, Adrian Evans and Patrick Evans, who were killed in Tunisia in 2015.

Smile for Joel was set up by Joel's mother Suzy Evans and her son Owen to support other families who have been affected through similarly traumatic experiences. It has already raised more than £100,000 since it was set up.

A Smile for Joel statement says there are 'three excellent reasons' to take part.

"This is a fantastic activity which is inclusive for all ages/ability which helps towards their wellbeing. This activity will support much-needed school funds and by supporting Smile for Joel you will be helping families affected by homicide."

A Mile for Joel was launched at St Mary's Primary in Wednesbury, where Joel was a former pupil. Children are asked to donate £2 to take part in the challenge with £1 going to their school and the other £1 to Smile for Joel. For more information visit smileforjoel.com or facebook.com/smileforjoel/

Joel Richards – Tunisia terror victim

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Yesterday's rubbish – tomorrow's antiques?

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips

I HAVE talked about vintage bottles in this column before – but I thought this week we would re-visit the subject as we have an especially unusual one coming up for sale in our next auction!

Found buried in a south Shropshire river bank some years ago this William and Mary brandy bottle is in amazing condition for its age and is bound to catch the eye of collectors.

But much more humble examples also sell well and are currently to be found featured in the pages of popular design magazines

Bottles look good almost anywhere in the home, from the hallway and kitchen to a dining room or home office.

Old wine bottles make great single-stem vases and coloured ones look really attractive displayed in a group.

Perfume bottles are a collector's favourite and are much sought after not only for their particular age or make but also for their shapes - they look lovely in a bedroom or bathroom.

Generally speaking, look out for unusual shapes and colours, I've seem some very beautiful bottles that originated in other countries and probably contained liqeurs.

Champagne bottles make very nice candles holders – go for the labels this time, Bollinger and Veuve Clicquot – and old glass inkwells, although not strictly 'bottles', are idea displayed in a home office or used as pen holders.

Medicine bottles always attract attention from saleroom bidders, we sold a large collection last year, and again these look good in a bathroom.

Stoneware bottles dating from the Victorian and Edwardian era are perfect for a kitchen, look out for the branded ones, they are especially collectable.

Old bottles in good condition are fairly plentiful and this is largely because they would have been discarded in rubbish tips long before the days or recycling and therefore remained relatively undamaged – yesterday's refuse can be today's antiques.

Having said that, as with all vintage items check bottles carefully for any cracks or chips before you buy.

And of course, you could just buy an old bottle in which to send a message – it might just reach its destination!

*** The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables will take place at the Mill Street saleroom, Low Town, Bridgnorth on Tuesday, April 3, from 10.30am.**

Viewing is during the weekend and on the Monday prior to the sale and catalogues are available from the saleroom or online at www.perryandphillips.co.uk. Newcomers to the auction should arrive in plenty of time to register and be allocated a bidding number and bids may be made (by prior arrangement) over the phone or left with the auctioneer.

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*** A new promotional film about Perry and Phillips Auctioneers can be found on our website.**

School uniforms are rooted in our history

Uniforms help children look smart

LOVE them or hate them, most of us have worn a school uniform at some time in our lives.

My secondary school had grey woollen blazers trimmed in emerald green, grey pleated, knee length skirts and a pill box hat that went missing on my first day.

It is widely believed that wearing a uniform improves the way students learn and their behaviour at school, it also differentiates between students and any strangers that may be in the school grounds and helps to reduce victimisation linked to what someone is wearing or their social status.

Today there is consideration for gender free uniform and many schools include rules such as skirt length, shirts tucked in and sock colour.

There is no legislation that deals specifically with school uniforms, a school's uniform policy is generally the responsibility of the board of governors with guidance from education authorities.

Gov.uk states "Each school decides its uniform and must not discriminate based on gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis

belief. The head teacher can discipline your child for not wearing the school uniform. Your child can be suspended or expelled if they repeatedly ignore the uniform rules. Schools can also decide if girls can wear trousers, or if religious dress is allowed."

In the United Kingdom school uniforms date back to the 16th century, the first was thought to be Christ Hospital School in London in 1552.

Students at Eton, the private school in Berkshire, wore top hats and tail coats right up until 1972, they still have a strict uniform policy.

The school uniform market is worth hundreds of millions of pounds and recently the supermarkets have offered a wide choice of styles at low prices meaning primary school children can be kitted out more easily, reducing the financial implication to parents of younger children, especially as there is usually a winter and summer clothing requirement. Most schools and academies are selling the items that sport the official embroidered badge in house.

Africa is the largest wearer of school uniform, it thrives due to it's students feeling a sense of belonging but most countries around the world adopt uniform in some form.

A Japanese elementary school has recently introduced a new uniform designed by Georgio Armani and costing parents over £500.

Our children get a great sense of association and inclusion from wearing the same as their friends, being part of a team and getting used to the discipline and structure of rules and they look so smart too.

Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Scout movement said: "The uniform makes for brotherhood, since when universally adopted it covers up all differences of class and country."

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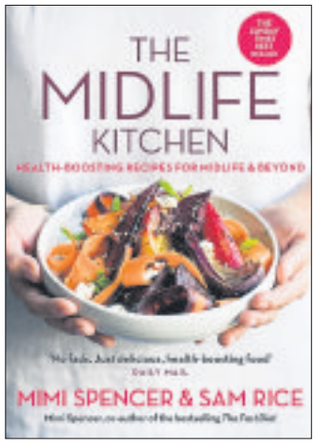
Ginger and pumpkin cheesecake from The Midlife Kitchen

Food writer friends Mimi Spencer and Sam Rice in the kitchen

How to cook, eat and live well as the years tick by



The Midlife Kitchen by Mimi Spencer and Sam Rice is published by Mitchell Beazley, priced £16.99

THE key to really eating well, and not forcing yourself to eat sad salad after sad salad – particularly when you hit the mid-life stage – is to focus on taste and flavour above everything.

By Ella Walker

Well, this is what cookbook authors Mimi Spencer, 50, and Sam Rice, 48, believe: "Just because something is healthy, you don't have to eat it – we'd rather get our greens fix from a nice watercress soup than a wheatgrass shot."

The food writer friends first met at the school gates and are now celebrating the paperback version of their recipe collection, The Midlife Cookbook, which dishes up recipes big on taste as well as nutrition, targeted for those facing middle-age.

What made you tackle the middle chunk of life in cookbook form?

When you hit midlife, it is often a time for reflection on where you are and what you still want to do with your life. We both came to realise the limiting factor for most people as they get older is their health. If you look after yourself, you can still look forward to a good, long healthspan (we prefer this term to lifespan), which is the number of fit, functional years ahead. So where better to start than with food?

What should people be most aware of nutrition-wise during this period of their life?

As we age, there are two key things that happen relating to food: First, we need fewer calories overall as our metabolism slows, and secondly, we become less efficient at digesting the food we do eat. In practical terms, we need to eat nutrient-dense foods in order to get adequate nutrition from fewer calories. Foods that fit the bill include plenty of colourful fruit and veg, eggs, full-fat yogurt, lean (mainly non-meat) protein and nuts and seeds. The trick is to get these ingredients onto your fork in the tastiest way possible.

How can people best shake up their approach to cooking and food?

Shift food and cooking up the priority list a little. We all have to eat, and so instead of seeing it as a time-consuming inconvenience, it's more helpful to view it as an important investment in ourselves.

How have your own tastes and attitudes to food changed with age?

It might sound strange, but where we once craved a creamy pasta, we now prefer an interesting salad, not because we are 'trying to be good', but because our palates have shifted and we are naturally drawn to more interesting flavours and textures. We've also found that investing a bit more time and thought in the food we prepare and eat has been a hugely positive thing, for our bodies, minds and social lives.

What do you feel when you cook?

For a long time, we were a bit resentful of the time we spent in the kitchen. When our kids were young, it was endless fish fingers and spag bol, so it really did seem like Groundhog Day. But now as midlifers, things have changed. Our kids are older, and we can cook more of what we want.

What most concerns you about fad diets and the so-called 'clean-eating brigade'?

What strikes us as bizarre with the recent wave of clean-eaters, is how what you eat is somehow linked to how good a human being you are. A lot of the language used is misleading and, in some cases, plain wrong. A green juice will not detox you, that is what your kidneys and liver are for.

Why, traditionally, do you think midlife has been relatively ignored?

Probably because the media has, for the longest time, been fixated with youth, Times have changed: Midlife is where the action is.

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X Factor's Brenda is nicest star in town

She's not in the least sniffy about her X Factory past. Brenda Edwards is thrilled that her ITV success helped catapult her into the world of entertainment – so that she still gets great roles now, though it's a dozen years since her appearance on the second series of the show, back in 2005.

Brenda's life changed forever when she entered The X Factor in 2005. She was the last woman standing in the semi-finals and left the audience and judges spellbound week after week before signing up for a 27-date X Factor UK arena tour.

The ultimate acceptance by the public came when Brenda was presented with the Screen Nation Award in 2007 for Favourite Reality TV Star, which was a people's choice award.

In 2006, Brenda was snapped up to play Mama Morton in Chicago the Musical in the West End. She received such great acclaim for her portrayal of the prison warden that she was asked back to play the role again after appearing in the 10th anniversary gala performance.

In 2007, Brenda created the role of Pearl Pastor in Carmen Jones at the Royal Festival Hall, performing with both the London and Royal Philharmonic orchestras.

"It's been an interesting ride," she says, a master of understatement.

She's on the road now with Hairspray, calling in at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre from Monday to March 3.

"It's an amazing feeling to be part of the show. It's a great cast. It's nice to have fun and everybody is so supportive. That's what's needed when you're on the road and away from your family at home. It's nice that we all get on and we have fun."

The action in Hairspray is set in Baltimore in 1962 where Tracy Turnblad, a big girl with big hair and an even bigger heart, is on a mission to follow her dreams and dance her way onto national TV. Tracy's audition makes her a local star and soon she is using her new-found fame to fight for equality, bagging local heartthrob Link Larkin along the way. The show features the hit songs Welcome To The 60s, You Can't Stop The Beat, The Nicest Kids in Town and many more.

Brenda says: "It's an amazing feel-good show, but the things we're talking about are anything but feel-good. It was a time of racism and oppression but the musical doesn't shove that down your throat.

"There's an underlying message there which is serious and poignant, whether it's to do with sexism, ageism, religion or anything else. There is no other musical that covers so many topics.

"I've wanted to play this part for a long time. I auditioned for the West End, but I wasn't ready at the time because I was fresh from The X Factor. I wasn't successful then but it meant that I could go away and grow and come back with a real understanding of how to play the character. I hope I've achieved that.

"It's such a great role. She's very similar to me. I identify with her. The way she speaks her mind and she's a fighter and a strong lady. She has some amazing songs. I'm very lucky to be playing her."

She is respectful of the way The X Factor changed her career. It gave her a platform and she's used that to keep moving forward. "I didn't even know what I was looking to get out of it. I didn't think I'd win it or get as far as the live shows, to be honest. Having gone on the show and been in that bubble – and that's what it is – it's easy to be confused once you come out because you are just shielded from the outside world.

"It's only when you come out and are on your own that you have to have this strong determination to put it behind you and decide where to go next. I just kept singing in clubs and doing lots of gigs.

"I was in it for 11 weeks until the semi finals. I do believe I was one of the lucky ones. But you make your own luck and destiny. I wasn't put straight in for Chicago. I had to audition and I had five auditions for one role. It was very daunting. That was more frightening for me than my X Factor auditions."

Away from the stage, Brenda has faced battles of her own after being diagnosed with breast cancer. She made the brave decision to go public about that in the hope that her victory against the disease might inspire others.

Welcome to the 60s – Brenda Edwards in Hairspray

Sexism, ageism, religion – no other musical covers so many topics

"I didn't hide the breast cancer away because I wanted to be somebody that could try to help somebody else out there. That's why I came out there. I was aware that people would see me as someone in the public eye. I wanted to raise awareness for the cancer. I went through it when I was on the Hairspray tour the last time. That's another reason why I wanted to come back this time. It was such a strong network of support for me.

"I felt my breast and it turned out it was that. I caught it early and had chemo and it's not nice, it's horrible, I have side effects but I'm alive. I am thankful every single day. That's what makes me want to do this show. You don't know when your time will be up. I want to spread the joy and happiness. I want to help others. I want to empower others."

Andy Richardson

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.**

Stereophonics – tenth album

Have a nice St David's Day with Stereophonics

ST DAVID'S Day will certainly have a Welsh flavour at Birmingham Genting Arena on Thursday (March 1) with Stereophonics in concert.

One of Britain's best live bands, the group formed in the South Wales village of Cwmaman 26 years ago and come to the venue toting their tenth studio album Scream Above The Sounds, follow up to 2015 chart-topper Keep The Village Alive.

Featuring singles Caught By The Wind and All In One Night, Scream Above The Sounds was primarily recorded at the band's west London HQ with the help of regular collaborator Jim Lowe. Frontman Kelly Jones says he aimed to write 'big anthemic songs', adding: "Every song offers a sense of release. Even when there's nostalgia, fear or anxiety, they're still all offering hope and room to manoeuvre."

Stereophonics consist of founders Kelly Jones (vocals/guitar) and Richard Jones (bass) along with Adam Zindani (guitar) and Jamie Morrison (drums). Keyboardist Tony Kirkham joins the band for live shows. Birmingham-born Zindani, former lead singer and guitarist with Brum band Casino, has been with Stereophonics for 11 years now. Morrison, from Huntingdon, previously played with Noisettes.

Stereophonics have been touring the globe and were one of the most regular performers at the V Festival. Their most popular tracks in a career that stretches back to 1997 debut Word Gets Around include Just Looking, Have A Nice Day, Madame Helga, Maybe Tomorrow, Dakota and C'est la Vie.

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WOLVERHAMPTON MAGAZINE

Family history inspires comedian

He's the comedian best known for football banter with Frank Skinner but David Baddiel's latest show is all about his family.

Baddiel's relationship with Black Country legend Frank was built around their love of The Beautiful Game. They were the poster boys of Euro '96, had a huge hit with Three Lions (with help from The Lightning Seeds) and attracted massive audiences to their witty Fantasy Football show.

Both had been successful comics beforehand. University of Cambridge educated Baddiel had an earlier successful partnership with Rob Newman, the first comedians to sell out Wembley Arena, while Frank came from the school of hard knocks before teaching and then comedy, going from Midlands to national fame. They remain close friends.

David says: "We're an odd couple, Frank and I. I saw him yesterday, we communed about the death of Mark E Smith. He was such a big fan of The Fall. I knew he'd be upset so I went to see him, he lives in my road. We used to live together and when he moved out he bought a house two doors down. He's now bought a house 100 doors down. It's a very expensive form of stalking."

My Family: Not the Sitcom is at Birmingham New Alexandra Theatre on February 28, Dudley Town Hall on April 19 and Stafford Gatehouse on May 19.

"I look at the fact that my mother, who was born in Nazi Germany, escaped from the regime by the skin of her teeth. The mad way she lived her life might have been rooted in that. Something about my mother speaks to me about a woman who knew she nearly didn't have a life and so lived it as a punch in the face to the Nazis."

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Low or high times with Morrissey

Gig of the week has to be Morrissey, pictured, at the Genting Arena on Tuesday, although the former Smiths frontman has become a divisive figure. Last year's Low In High School album got a mixed reaction. Other highlights include The Blockheads with Derek 'The Draw' Hussey at the mic for the late Ian Dury at Bilston's Robin 2 tomorrow (Friday). Liverpool's All We Are are back with the excellent Sunny Hills album and a gig at the Hare and Hounds, Kings Heath, next Thursday.

Top comedy talent at Hippodrome gala

There's a funny couple of weeks ahead at Birmingham Hippodrome with lots of top comedians visiting.

There is a charity night on Wednesday with Luisa Omielan's Dead Funny Birmingham's Big Comedy Gala. Luisa from What Would Beyoncé Do?!, Comic Relief, Live at the Apollo and Thigh Gap! presents the coolest comics on the circuit for a one night bonanza. Confirmed guests include Sara Pascoe, Mo Gilligan, Iain Stirling, Tom Allen, Suzi Ruffell, Ellie Taylor, Tez Ilyas, Jen Brister, Aaron Twitchen and Dan Nightingale. All proceeds go to Helena's Hospice Foundation supporting hospices in the Midlands and nationwide.

Other laughter makers with shows at the Hippodrome include Sean Lock on Tuesday and Dara O'Briain for three consecutive nights from Thursday, March 1.

SATURDAY'S TV FEBRUARY 24

CHOICE

Ant & Dec

Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
(ITV, 7pm)
New series. The entertainer duo return with their regular weekend variety show, featuring audience surprises, outlandish stunts and celebrity guests. Kylie Minogue gets proceedings under way by opening the show with a studio performance, and Olly Murs swaps his rotating chair on The Voice for a seat in the announcer's booth. Amanda Holden becomes the first famous face to fall victim to the pair's latest round of Undercover pranks, and Stephen Mulhern is back to preside over another Ant Versus Dec contest, this time featuring monster trucks. Plus, Scarlett Moffat returns to Takeaway for more extravagant challenges, and the boys launch the show's biggest-ever Place on the Plane giveaway.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage from day 15 in PyeongChang, South Korea. **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage from day 15 in PyeongChang, South Korea. **4.00** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Scotland v England (Kick-off 4.45pm).

7.00 BBC News.
7.10 Regional Programme.
7.15 All Together Now. More amateur and professional singers hope to impress "the 100" as they take to the stage in the singalong challenge, competing for the two remaining spots in the Grand Final. This time, one of the acts dares a cover of judge Geri Horner's biggest hit, It's Raining Men, while others opt for Ed Sheeran's Galway Girl, Wet Wet Wet's Goodnight Girl, and Ain't Nobody by Chaka Khan. Rob Beckett presides over the proceedings.
8.20 Casualty. Ethan becomes preoccupied with solving the ED's budget problems, compromising patient care in the process. Meanwhile, Glen makes a decidedly unromantic proposal to Robyn.
9.10 Troy: Fall of a City. Helen and Paris reach Troy, and discover news of their illicit elopement has arrived ahead of them. Rulers Priam and Hecuba engage in an agonising debate over whether to send Helen back to her husband, or face the consequences of defiance. Meanwhile, in Sparta, Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon marshal the Greek forces in preparation of an invasion of Troy. Notable in his absence is Odysseus, king of Ithaca, but is he really as ill as he claims to be? Historical epic, starring Louis Hunter.
10.10 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.
10.30 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches.
11.55 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Radzi Chinyanganya presents coverage of the opening events on day 16 in PyeongChang, South Korea, which includes curling, bobsleigh, and ice hockey.
3.30 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Continued coverage from day 16 in PyeongChang, South Korea.

BBC2

6.00 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day 15 from PyeongChang, South Korea. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Hairy Bikers' Comfort Food. (R) **12.00** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Continued coverage from day 15 in PyeongChang, South Korea. **1.15** Escape to the Country. **2.00** Italy's Invisible Cities. (R) **3.00** Nigel Slater's Middle East. (R) **4.00** Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. (R) **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** Tom Kerridge: Lose Weight for Good. (R)
6.00 Hugh's Wild West. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall extensive wildlife tour continues as he visits Dorset, where the mild climate has provided all kinds of creatures with ideal habitat conditions. He meets retired policeman Mick Jenner, who has been filming an otter family for the past few years, and local bat enthusiast Colin Morris, who has been keeping a watchful eye on the rare Bechstein bat. Plus, at Portland Bird Observatory, Hugh joins ornithologist Martin Cade in monitoring migrating blackcaps and wheatears.
7.00 Winter Olympics – Today at the Games. Clare Balding presents highlights of the 15th day's action in PyeongChang, South Korea, which included snowboarding, alpine skiing, and four-man bobsleigh.
8.00 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. Footage of animals that have unusual means of finding their way around, including dung beetles that navigate by the sun and moon and pigeons with remarkable memories.
8.30 Dad's Army. Mainwaring seizes the chance to contribute to the war effort by guarding a captured German U-boat crew. Guest starring Philip Madoc. (R)
9.00 Judi Dench: All the World's Her Stage. Billy Connolly, Samantha Bond, Daniel Craig and Ian McKellen are among those reminiscing about the veteran actress in this celebration of her 60-year career. (R)
10.00 Film: Philomena. (2013) A disillusioned political journalist helps a woman find the child that was forcibly taken from her in the 1950s. Fact-based drama, with Judi Dench and Steve Coogan.
11.30 Film: Strawberry Fields. (2012) Drama, starring Anna Madeley.
12.55 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.00** BBC News.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Bagel and Becky Show. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.25** Dancing on Ice. (R) **1.20** ITV News; Weather. **1.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Ireland v Wales (Kick-off 2.15pm). **4.30** ITV News; Weather. **4.50** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.00** The Chase. (R)
6.00 Take Me Out: 10th Anniversary Special. A special edition of the matchmaking show, in which Paddy McGuinness switches the men and women around, with female celebrities seeking the approval of a panel of returning Romeos.
7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. New series. The entertainers return with their weekend variety show, featuring a show-opening performance by Kylie Minogue. Plus, Amanda Holden falls victim to an Undercover prank.
8.30 The Voice UK. The contest heats up as the teams assembled by Tom Jones, Will.i.am, Jennifer Hudson and Olly Murs enter the Battle phase. Here, the coaches are tasked with chipping away at their roster of would-be stars via head-to-head studio battles. Each of the coaches are given 'steals', which gives them a chance to save any of the acts knocked out by their rival coaches during the sing-offs. As the contest gets ever fiercer, Emma Willis will be on hand to congratulate the victors, and commiserate with their defeated rivals.
9.50 Through the Keyhole. Keith Lemon challenges Jonathan Ross, Melanie Sykes and Ashley Banjo to guess which celebrity abodes he has invaded this week. Last in the series.
10.45 ITV News; Weather.
11.05 Film: Lethal Weapon 4. (1998) Action adventure, starring Mel Gibson and Danny Glover.
1.30 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 Mobil 1 The Grid. **6.45** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **7.10** The King of Queens. (R) **7.35** The King of Queens. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun. (R) **4.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R) **5.35** The Supervet. (R)
6.30 Channel 4 News.
7.00 Penelope Keith's Coastal Villages. Penelope explores the seaside villages of Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. She finds out how architect Edwin Lutyens and garden designer Gertrude Jekyll designed a home on the exposed coastline of the island of Lindisfarne, and walks along the golden beach of Low Newton, before taking in the medieval village of Warkworth. Previously seen on More4.
8.00 Britain at Low Tide. Tori Herridge continues her mission to chart Britain's rich maritime history via state-of-the-art technology. This time, she visits Dorset, where she tells the story of the world's first aircraft carriers. The team also reveals the crucial role the Dorset coastline played in D-Day, and searches for a unique Iron Age monument that can only be seen – sometimes – for a few hours each year.
9.00 Film: The Take. (2016) Premiere. An American pickpocket in Paris accidentally steals some top secret information, and finds himself on the run from the CIA. The agent in charge of the investigation recruits the thief's help when he discovers a sinister conspiracy that threatens both of them. Action thriller, starring Idris Elba.
10.50 Film: Dredd. (2012) A law enforcer in a post-apocalyptic city must fight his way out of a tower block dominated by a ruthless crime lord. Sci-fi thriller, starring Karl Urban and Lena Headey.
12.35 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **1.25** The Last Leg. (R) **2.20** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **5.20** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.05** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** Pets Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **11.00** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.00** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.00** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.00** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **3.00** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **4.00** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **5.00** Rich House, Poor House. (R)
6.00 The Wonderful World of Puppies. The documentary series continues, highlighting how newborn pups' simple desire for sustenance from their mother evolves into a more complex set of emotions, covering everything from relationships with litter-mates to their bond with humans. Dexter the dalmatian cultivates a strong early attachment to his owner via massage sessions, while Loki the weimaraner discovers that – even though he may have been removed from his litter – a playful child can make for the perfect companion. (R)
7.00 Cruising with Jane McDonald. The singer sails the Danube on one of the most luxurious ships of its type, as she makes her first foray into the realms of the river cruise. (R)
8.00 Britannia: Secrets of the Royal Yacht. Part one of two. Rob Bell examines iconic ships that have played significant roles in Britain's maritime and cultural history, beginning with the Royal Yacht Britannia. (R)
8.55 5 News Weekend.
9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games, including Fulham v Wolverhampton Wanderers and Sheffield Wednesday v Aston Villa.
10.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including Wigan Athletic v Rochdale and Charlton Athletic v Shrewsbury Town.
10.30 Britain's Favourite Biscuit. Celebrities including Sally Lindsay and Joe Swash discuss beloved biscuits, before the nation's favourite is revealed via a survey's results. (R)
11.55 Cruising with Jane McDonald.
12.10 SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 The Dark: Nature's Nighttime World **8.00** Winter Olympics Extra **9.00** Modus **10.30** Top of the Pops: 1985 **11.40** Annie Nightingale: Bird on the Wireless **12.40** Queens of Soul **1.40** Folk America on Later with Jools Holland **2.40** From Ice to Fire: The Incredible Science of Temperature **3.40** Close

ITV2
11.30 Take Me Out **1.05** Mr Bean **2.05** You've Been Framed! Gold **3.10 Film:** Babe (1995) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25 Film:** Babe (1995) **5.00 Film:** Nanny McPhee (2005) **6.00** FYI Daily **6.05 Film:** Nanny McPhee (2005) **7.05 Film:** The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (2014) **8.10** FYI Daily **8.15 Film:** The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (2014) **9.50** Survival of the Fittest **10.50** Family Guy **11.50** American Dad! **12.45** The Cleveland Show **1.40** Ibiza Weekender **2.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.50** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
1.25 Film: Columbo: The Most Dangerous Match (1973) **3.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **5.00** The Durrells **7.05** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.05** The Good Karma Hospital **1.55** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
11.25 Fishing Impossible **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Kempton. Coverage of today's race meetings at Kempton Park, Lingfield Park and Newcastle. **4.00 Film:** The Train Robbers (1973) **5.00** FYI Daily **5.05 Film:** The Train Robbers (1973) **5.55** Storage Wars **6.25** World Cup Rivalries: England v Argentina **6.45** Live Snooker: World Grand Prix. The second semi-final. **11.15 Film:** High Plains Drifter (1973) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25 Film:** High Plains Drifter (1973) **1.30** The Professionals **2.25** Counting Cars **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
12.35 The Big Bang Theory **7.15 Film:** Men in Black II (2002) **9.00 Film:** The Heat (2013) **11.20** Gogglebox **12.25** Naked Attraction **1.30** Celebs Go Dating **4.20** How I Met Your Mother **5.05** Rude(ish) Tube

Film4
11.00 Napoleon Dynamite (2004) **1.00** Ice Age: The Meltdown (2006) **2.45** Gulliver's Travels (2010) **4.25** The Family Stone (2005) **6.35** The Three Musketeers (2011) **9.00** Aliens: Special Edition (1986) **12.00** American Mary (2012) **2.05** The Bling Ring (2013) **3.55** Close

SUNDAY'S TV FEBRUARY 25

CHOICE

Tom Burke

Strike – Career of Evil (BBC1, 9pm)
Part one of a two-part adaptation of JK Rowling's detective novel, with Tom Burke returning for a third time as private eye Cormoran Strike. Robin receives a severed leg in the post, and Strike is soon on the trail of potential suspects - all of whom have personal vendettas against him. Matthew's jealousy threatens his relationship with Robin, especially when she and Strike go away overnight. Tom Burke, Holliday Grainger, Andrew Brooke, Ben Compton, Jessica Gunning, Matt King, Kerr Logan and Killian Scott star.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Wanted Down Under. **2.00** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.45** Get Away for Winter. **3.30** Songs of Praise. **4.05** Earth's Natural Wonders. (R) **5.05** Earth's Natural Wonders. (R)
6.05 BBC News.
6.20 Regional Programme.
6.30 Countryfile. Matt Baker and Helen Skelton present the show from Derbyshire, where they report on blood donation drop-ins for alpacas and a form of above ground potholing involving squeezing in and out of rocky tors. Tom Heap investigates illegal abattoirs and Adam Henson meets a North Wales farmer who uses a special kind of working dog to manage his livestock.
7.30 Hold the Sunset. Edith turns 70, and Phil and Roger try to outshine each other with their gifts, while Roger also plots to ruin his mother's new romance. Guest starring Joanna Scanlan and Anne Reid.
8.00 Call the Midwife. Barbara helps a pregnant mother-of-two whose husband has recently died, and is on hand to give her support when a further tragedy drives her and her children from their home. Lucille teaches a health and relationships class at the youth club, only to encounter a furious mother who objects to her daughter attending.
9.00 Strike – Career of Evil. Part one of a two-part adaptation of JK Rowling's detective novel. Strike investigates potential suspects when Robin receives a severed leg in the post. Starring Tom Burke.
10.00 BBC News.
10.20 Regional Programme.
10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman presents action from the only Premier League clash of the day, as Manchester United hosted Chelsea at Old Trafford.
11.15 Film: Point Break. (1991) An undercover FBI agent infiltrates a Californian surfing gang to investigate a spate of armed robberies. Kathryn Bigelow's thriller, starring Keanu Reeves.
1.10 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.15** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day 16 from PyeongChang, South Korea. **11.00** Live Winter Olympics 2018 Closing Ceremony. Clare Balding presents coverage from PyeongChang, South Korea. **2.00** Live Athletics: Glasgow Indoor Grand Prix. Coverage of the meeting from Emirates Arena. **5.30** Flog It! (R)
6.00 Back in Time for Tea. A family embarks on a time-travelling adventure to discover how a post-war revolution in food transformed the British way of life, sampling meals from 1918 to the present day. (R)
7.00 Winter Olympics – Today at the Games. Clare Balding presents highlights of the 16th and final day's action in PyeongChang, South Korea, which included the deciding heats of the four-man bobsleigh, the gold-medal match in the women's curling competition, plus the men's gold medal ice hockey encounter, and also the ladies 30km mass start biathlon event.
8.00 Top Gear. New series. Matt LeBlanc, Chris Harris and Rory Reid take a motorsports road trip across the Wild West. Back on the track, Rob Brydon is the Star in a Reasonably Fast Car.
9.00 Life And Death Row: The Mass Execution. An attorney tries to halt an execution on the basis that the condemned man did not get a fair trial 24 years previously, but the original prosecutor is still determined to see the sentence is carried out. The family of a prisoner claim that DNA testing will prove his innocence, and the daughter of the woman he is accused of killing hopes his death will allow her to move on.
10.15 The Mash Report. Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present the satirical and surreal take on the week's news. (R)
10.45 Top Gear: Extra Gear. New series. Rory Reid is joined by guests Sabine Schmitz and John Hennessey for a celebration of V8 engines, and takes a ride in a Mk 1 GT40 with Le Mans champion Jackie Walker.
11.10 Cleverman.
12.00 Women's Six Nations Highlights. **12.30** Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **1.30** Holby City. (R) **2.30** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Love Your Garden. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Martin Lewis Money Show. (R) **11.30** The Voice UK. (R) **12.45** ITV News; Weather. **1.00** Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. (R) **2.30** What Would Your Kid Do? (R) **3.30** Tipping Point. (R) **4.30** ITV News; Weather. **4.50** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)
6.00 Dancing on Ice. Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present fairytale week, as the remaining contestants perform fantastical routines to impress judges Christopher Dean, Jayne Torvill, Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo before the dreaded Skate-Off determines which couple will be leaving the show. Featuring a guest appearance from the cast of Disney on Ice.
8.00 Endeavour. The detective drama prequel takes inspiration from an episode from Oxford's real-life history, in which Nation of Islam preacher and civil rights campaigner Malcolm X was invited to speak at the Oxford Union in December 1964, less than two months before his assassination in New York. Here, Morse struggles to negotiate escalating social tensions as a protest at a hair salon exposes rapidly escalating racial unrest in the heart of the city. Meanwhile, a murder at an Army base threatens to unveil long-held secrets within the regiment.
10.00 ITV News; Weather.
10.15 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)
11.15 Six Nations Highlights. Action from the third round of the championship, featuring France v Italy at the Orange Velodrome, Ireland v Wales at the Aviva Stadium and Scotland v England at Twickenham.
12.10 100 Year Old Driving School. (R) **12.35** Marcella. (R) **1.25** Jackpot247. **3.00** Take on the Twisters. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.30** Jamie's Quick & Easy Food. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **2.55 Film:** Tooth Fairy. (2010) Family comedy, starring Dwayne Johnson. **5.00 Film:** Ice Age: Continental Drift. (2012) Animated comedy sequel, with the voice of Ray Romano.
6.35 Channel 4 News.
7.00 Posh Pawn. James Constantinou is armed and dangerous in an army tank that a military vehicle enthusiast hopes to sell for £30,000 to fund the family trip of a lifetime, and brushes up on his history when he's presented with a Sultan's sword. Designer handbag expert Claudia Valentin meets a man-about-town who wants to upgrade his Hermes Birkin bag. (R)
8.00 Hannibal's Elephant Army: The New Evidence. Scientists search for traces of the Carthaginian general's journey across the Alps with an army that included 40,000 men, 9000 cavalry and 37 elephants, a challenge that involved traversing mountains, raging rivers and the territory of hostile tribes. New evidence found in the rocky soil of the mountain range offers clues to the specific details of the trek. Palaeobiologist Dr Tori Herridge reveals why elephants are surprisingly good at mountain climbing, while historian Dr Eve MacDonald examines the motivations that drove Hannibal to make his seemingly impossible journey.
9.00 Homeland. The espionage drama continues with Carrie's attempts to free the 200 members of the intelligence community imprisoned by the president after the attempt on her life. As Wellington protects Keane, O'Keefe continues to broadcast and Carrie makes a discovery. Claire Danes, Linus Roache and Elizabeth Marvel star.
10.10 Gogglebox. (R)
11.05 Film: Shutter Island. (2010) Mystery thriller, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Mark Ruffalo.
1.35 The World's Most Expensive Food. (R) **2.30** The Supervet. (R) **3.25** Four Rooms with Sarah Beeny. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.15** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.20** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.35** Mofy. (R) **6.40** Simon. (R) **6.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.50** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.05** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.15** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.25** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **7.55** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.10** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.25** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.45** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.55** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.10** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.30** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.40** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.05** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.00** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.35 Film:** The Bridge at Remagen. (1969) **1.50 Film:** A Bridge Too Far. (1977) Fact-based Second World War drama, with Dirk Bogarde. **5.05 Film:** Where Eagles Dare. (1968) Second World War adventure, with Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood.
8.00 Carabao Cup Final: Highlights. Arsenal v Manchester City. Colin Murray presents extended action from the showpiece match, as Arsene Wenger's Gunners met Pep Guardiola's men at Wembley Stadium. Arsenal had only ever won this competition twice, with their most recent victory coming 25 years ago. City had lifted the cup four times, most recently in 2016 following a penalty-shootout victory over Liverpool.
8.55 5 News Weekend.
9.00 Film: Trainwreck. (2015) Premiere. A journalist lives her life by her father's maxim that monogamy never works, and has spent her adult life enjoying freedom from commitment. When she is sent to interview a doctor, an attraction develops between them, and she begins to wonder if there might be something to be said for a stable relationship. Comedy, starring Amy Schumer, Bill Hader, Brie Larson and Tilda Swinton.
10.00 5 News Update.
10.05 Film: Trainwreck. (2015) Concluded.
11.35 Film: Sex Tape. (2014) A couple try to spice up their marriage by filming themselves having sex, but then have to stop anyone from seeing the footage. Comedy, with Cameron Diaz and Jason Segel.
1.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** Cowboy Builders. (R) **4.00** My Mum's Hotter Than Me! (R) **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Divine Designs. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble **9.30 Film:** Clouds of Sils Maria (2014) **11.30** From Ice to Fire: The Incredible Science of Temperature **12.30** The Genius of Bert Jansch: Folk, Blues & Beyond **2.00** The Enigma of Nic Jones: Return of Britain's Lost Folk Hero **3.00** The Art of France **4.00** Close

ITV2
12.30 Mr Bean **1.35** The Voice UK **3.00 Film:** Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **4.55 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang (2010) **5.55** FYI Daily **6.00 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang (2010) **7.00 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **8.00** FYI Daily **8.05 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Survival of the Fittest **11.00** Family Guy **12.25** American Dad! **1.25** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.20** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.35 Lewis **1.35** A Touch of Frost **3.50** The Durrells **6.00** Midsomer Murders **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00 Film:** Captain Corelli's Mandolin (2001) **12.35** Life of Crime **1.30** Blue Murder **2.45** George and Mildred **4.05** Road to Avonlea **5.50** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4
11.35 Minder **12.45** Live Snooker: World Grand Prix. The opening session of the final. **5.15** Storage Wars **5.45** The Chase Celebrity Special **6.45** Live Snooker: World Grand Prix. The second session of the final. **11.15 Film:** A Dangerous Man (2010) **12.15** FYI Daily **12.20 Film:** A Dangerous Man (2010) **1.20** Minder **2.20** Counting Cars **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.05 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **11.20** The Goldbergs **12.20 Film:** Stuart Little (1999) **2.00** The Goldbergs **3.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.00** Young Sheldon **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.00 Film:** Men in Black 3 (2012) **9.00** Celebs Go Dating **10.00** Naked Attraction **11.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.05** Gogglebox **1.10** Celebs Go Dating **2.15** Tattoo Fixers **3.05** Rude Tube **3.35** Hollyoaks

Film4
1.00 Cutthroat Island (1995) **3.35** Pride & Prejudice (2005) **6.10** Snow White & the Huntsman Interview Special **6.20** Snow White & the Huntsman (2012) **9.00** Alien 3 (1992) **11.15** Salt (2010) **1.15** Monsoon Wedding (2001) **3.35** Close

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Jacky Standish

ATTRACTIVE, confident and with a contagious laugh – that's professional chef, Jacky Standish.
Looking younger than her 57 years, Jacky has recently drawn up an unusual "bucket list", though she's quick to point out: "I'm not dying."
For Jacky, who was so ashamed of her teeth she walked her dog at 5am to avoid meeting people, clever dentistry at North Street has marked a new life chapter, punctuated with a list of the all places she's only dreamed of dining.
The former chef and house manager at Hagley Hall has undergone a major transformation after gum disease ruined her smile, confidence and her ability to chew properly.
Now, with four implants retaining an upper overdenture and a partial lower traditional prosthetic, she's thrilled with her new look. "My jaw is sore from smiling so much. No-one would ever know they are not my natural teeth," she says.

Theresa Reardon

WHEN Theresa Reardon from London set out to fix a longstanding dental problem she never imagined it would take a lifetime's search before finding the answer in Dudley.
Even a trip as a dental tourist to Budapest failed to help the 82-year-old.
After a lifetime of denture troubles, it was during a visit to a friend at Wolverhampton she found fresh hope in a newspaper article. For eight years the former Queen's Household domestic kept the cutting about the work of Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS Eng GDC108353.
"I read it over and over again, then one day booked an appointment," she recalls.
"I could never bite an apple – the bottom denture was all over the place – but the day I had my new dentures I went out and had a steak. Steven has done for me what no other dentist has. It's been a long time coming, I'm so grateful that I don't have to put my hand over my mouth any more."

Vicki Ball

MEETING Vicki Ball is all about the smiles – lots of them and she's gushing with the praise about her new smile.
A retired community midwife, who was based in Wordsley, the bubbly 60-something-year-old is quick to affirm: "I love my new teeth."
Adding, "you can't tell they're not my own," Vicki admits her smile has not always been her favourite attribute.
"I'd grown tired of living my life around my uncomfortable dentures.
I never really stopped going out, but when I did, I was always thinking ahead where I could go to take my teeth out." Vicki's treatment included two implants to stabilise a lower prosthetic and the prescribing of high quality, traditional upper dentures to help support facial features.
"My husband, Terry, couldn't believe they were so good. Not to have to keep thinking about my teeth when I'm out is such a relief," she says.

John Clews

JOHN Clews is sharply focussed on why he's agreed to do this interview: "I want to give people like me hope," he declares.
The skilled die-sinker knows a thing or two about clever engineering – and with multiple failing teeth, instinctively realised that he too required the kind of skill that sets him apart as an experienced factory problem-solver.
For years he endured daily toothache, but crippled by fear of the dentist, avoided treatment until he could no longer tolerate the problems.
"I came here [North Street] and they promised to restore my smile, but they gave me back my life," he adds.
After having six implants in his upper jaw to support a complete arch of teeth and other remedial work,
John is now able to live his life without having to worry about his teeth.
And the dental phobia? "All staff were fantastic, I felt so much at ease."

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PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Elysium, Channel 5, 11pm
In the future, most of the human race exists in poverty on a ruined Earth, while a wealthy elite live in luxury on an orbiting space station. A man dying of radiation poisoning fights security forces to gain access to the satellite and its medical facilities. Sci-fi thriller from the director of District 9, starring Matt Damon. (2013)

TUESDAY
Killer Collector, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Two women at an auction unwittingly purchase a storage locker belonging to a serial killer that contains evidence of his crimes. They soon find themselves in a desperate race to uncover the truth before the murderer tracks them down. Thriller, directed by and starring Casper Van Dien. (2015)

WEDNESDAY
Good, BBC1, 11.45pm
A literary professor in 1930s Germany finds his work praised by the fast-rising Nazi party, and begins to enjoy the privileges conferred by their acclaim. As his prosperity grows, he becomes increasingly morally compromised, and as the true nature of Nazi ideology becomes clear, he tries to protect his Jewish psychiatrist from the state. Drama, with Viggo Mortensen, Jason Isaacs and Jodie Whittaker. (2008)

Elysium, Monday, Channel 5, 11pm

THURSDAY
My Family's Secret, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A man attempts suicide, leaving a cryptic note claiming he may have caused his sister's death. His wife goes back to his home town in search of answers and asks his brother for help. She does not realise her brother-in-law has a split personality, and digging up the past brings out his more dangerous aspects. Thriller, starring Nicholle Tom. (2010)

FRIDAY
Blades of Glory, BBC1, 11.05pm
A bad-boy figure skater and his effeminate arch-enemy are banned from the sport after their intense rivalry results in a brawl. However, the pair find a loophole in the regulations allowing them to enter the world championships as the first ever same-sex pair. Comedy, starring Will Ferrell. (2007)

Mary serves up more tasty treats in her new series

You just can't keep a good woman down.

Mary Berry may be 82, an age when most people are concentrating on relaxing rather than reaching the peak of their career, but she's bigger and more popular than ever. And it's all down to one little programme - The Great British Bake Off.

She was already well known before it came along, but the show turned her into a household name. Of course, she's no longer associated with it, having decided not to stay with the series, as her fellow judge Paul Hollywood did, when it moved to Channel 4.

Her place was taken by Prue Leith, who has proved a worthy successor. She also has a cheeky side that allows Hollywood to be less serious than in previous runs – does that mean Berry prefers people to mind their Ps and Qs when she's around?

Perhaps so, but seeing as she's going solo these days, it no longer matters. No doubt she will continue to bring her homespun magic to us for some time to come; certainly the BBC hope she will.

"Mary is an extraordinary woman, loved and adored by the British public, and the BBC is her natural home," says the broadcaster's director of content, Charlotte Moore.

"I've been very lucky to have had the pleasure of working with Mary for many years and I'm so pleased that relationship will continue. She is an inspiration to generations, a real icon and I can't wait to cook up more unmissable shows with her in the future."

Berry is still keen on bringing her wisdom to as many people as possible – and it seems that, if she is attracted to a project, she will grab it with both hands. It's an approach she credits to a three-month spell she had in hospital after contracting polio as a child; she claims that being away from her family inspired her to make the most of every opportunity.

Berry turns turn 83 in March, an age when many people are slowing down and enjoying their retirement. Instead, she's heading back into the kitchen to reveal the best way to prepare some of her favourite meals.

"These are my wonderful brand-new recipes - timeless classics, simple British dishes and delicious, modern favourites to tempt family and friends," she explains. "With my trusted tips and techniques for quick, easy and foolproof cooking, in Classic I'll show you how to make the very best food in my own special, no-fuss way."

And unlike some TV chefs, she doesn't like to bombard viewers with ingredients they may never have heard of: "It's very important that the recipes work and contain ingredients that everybody can buy from supermarkets."

Amen to that!

On the menu during the run will be rack of lamb with orange and thyme sauce, a perfect loin of pork with apple sauce, lemon meringue pie and many, many more mouth-watering meals and treats.

Classic Mary Berry, Monday, BBC1, 8.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Electric Dreams: The Father Thing
Channel 4, 10pm
Eleven-year-old Charlie Cotrell must make the most difficult decisions imaginable to protect his mother and the human race when he is among the first to realise that the homes of everyone on Earth are being infiltrated by an insidious extra-terrestrial threat. The return after a break of the sci-fi anthology featuring stories based on the works of Philip K Dick, with this instalment based on 1954 short story The Father-Thing and starring Greg Kinnear, Mireille Enos and Shannon Brown.

TUESDAY
Secrets of the National Trust with Alan Titchmarsh
Channel 5, 8pm
With its awesome frontage ('more glass than wall') and six turrets, Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire was a wonder of its time. The magnificent 16th-century mansion is Alan's first destination in series two of the programme looking at some of Britain's historical homes and gardens. He hears how Hardwick was the fabulous home of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, commonly referred to as Bess of Hardwick, who rose to become the second most powerful woman in Tudor England, after Queen Elizabeth I. Meanwhile, Miriam O'Reilly visits nearby Stainsby Mill, which produced flour and bread for the residents, guests and staff of the estate and, also in the Peak District, Jenni Bond travels to Ecton Mines, a rich source of copper bought by Bess's descendants. Finally, Peter Purves visits Oxburgh Hall, a moated manor house in Norfolk which boasts needlework created by Bess and Mary, Queen of Scots.

WEDNESDAY
The World's Most Extraordinary Homes
BBC2, 8pm
New series. Award-winning architect Piers Taylor and actress and property enthusiast Caroline Quentin return to explore more extraordinary homes around the world. In the opening episode, the pair travel to Portugal, where they come across four very different properties. First, they visit a ultramodern house located in the Portuguese Riviera, before travelling to Penela, to view a property owned by British ex-pats Neil and Shirley. The pair then visit a house built within a pine forest near the Atlantic coast, before ending their journey around Portugal at a property hidden in the mountainous region of Peneda-Geres National Park.

THURSDAY
Serial Killer with Piers Morgan
ITV, 9pm
Piers Morgan has interviewed several convicted killers for his US-based documentaries, including Mark Riebe last year. His latest unsettling encounter is with Lorenzo Gilyard, who is also known as the Kansas City Strangler. For nearly two decades, beginning in 1977, he brought fear to the streets of Kansas City, Missouri, raping and murdering vulnerable women before discarding their bodies. It wasn't until 2003 that DNA evidence linked the victims to Gilyard, a seemingly happily married man who was respected at his job as a sanitation worker. He was tried for seven murders and found guilty of six of them, and is now serving consecutive life sentences with no chance of parole. He continues to protest his innocence and at first seems to have an answer for all of Morgan's question, but eventually he starts to run out of excuses.

Serial Killer with Piers Morgan, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

FRIDAY
Live Athletics
BBC2, 5.50pm
The World Indoor Championships. Coverage of the evening session on the second day of the competition, which takes place at Arena Birmingham. The women's 60m will come to a conclusion tonight with the running of both the semi-finals and final, and there will also be finals staged in the men's long jump and women's shot put, while the women's pentathlon will conclude with the long jump and 800m. Other notable events on the timetable are the opening round of the men's 800m and women's 1500m, in addition to the semi-finals of the women's and men's 400m.

The Yorkshire Steam Railway: All Aboard
Channel 5, 8pm
New series. Life on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, following an eventful week during which plans are made to welcome star steam engine Royal Scot to the heritage railway.

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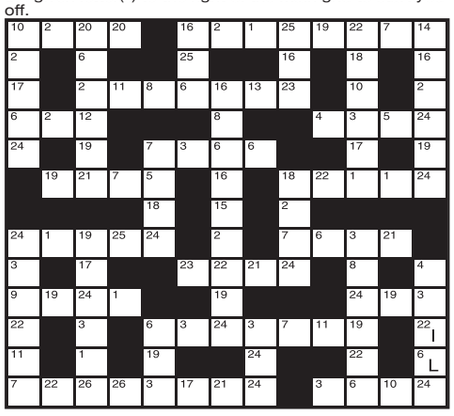
BRAIN GYM

No.468

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



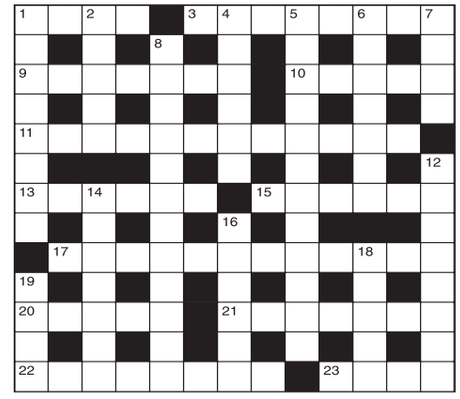
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6 L	19
7	20
8	21
9	22 I
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 M	2 Y	3 D	4 I	5 C	6 J	7 G	8 A	9 T	10 H	11 P	12 Z	13 V
14 O	15 Q	16 X	17 U	18 F	19 W	20 K	21 E	22 L	23 B	24 S	25 N	26 R

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Fail to get a spinster (4)
3. The cards I can beat are a disadvantage (8)
9. Tells of bishops losing prominent leader (7)
10. The colour of whitebeam berries (5)
11. Although inexperienced with digits, they're useful in the nursery (5,7)
13. Letter offering plenty of lip (6)
15. Figurine of astute construction (6)
17. Girl all at sea for the first time? (6,6)
20. Put ring on arm or leg to show condition of neglect (5)
21. Uneasy with the others I have (7)
22. Offered to look after Eastern Communist (8)
23. Forsook political wing (4)

Down

1. Spoil one gilt flower (8)
2. Loves to find the answer (5)
4. Attack because to put to sea (6)
5. Dose given to animal to make it a puller of heavy loads (7,5)
6. A bar, etc. for entertainment (7)
7. Left harbour (4)
8. Shrub trained in tree form went up in quality (8,4)
12. Tear about always showing great respect (8)
14. Atom ban affected water transport operator (7)
16. Half-open plant supplies part of meal (6)
18. A team apart (5)
19. Uninteresting place to live (4)

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Jealousy (4)
3. Rubbing (8)
9. Like fungus (7)
10. Disturb (5)
11. Tangle (12)
13. Ascends (6)
15. Squirm (6)
17. Esteem (12)
20. Concerning (5)
21. Unravel (7)
22. Constantly (8)
23. Colours (4)

Down

1. Effectiveness (8)
2. Poison (5)
4. Lessen (6)
5. Opposite numbers (12)
6. Briefly (2,5)
7. Observation (4)
8. Worked together (12)
12. Enthusiasm (8)
14. Ameliorate (7)
16. Existing (6)
18. Very coldly (5)
19. Overtake (4)

Sudoku

1				6	3			2
	7						4	
		8	4	7	9	1		
	5		6		7		1	
7				8				
	6		2		5		3	
		6	9	3	8	5		
	3						8	
4				2		3		9

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

7	9	2	4	8	3	6	1	5
5	4	8	2	1	6	3	9	7
6	3	1	9	7	5	8	2	4
1	8	3	7	9	2	5	4	6
9	5	6	3	4	8	1	7	2
4	2	7	5	6	1	9	8	3
3	7	5	1	2	9	4	6	8
2	6	9	8	3	4	7	5	1
8	1	4	6	5	7	2	3	9

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 6 Niblick; 7 Spent; 9 Actor; 10 Resided; 12 Stand to gain; 14 Legal action; 18 Besiege; 19 Adore; 21 Paint; 22 Setting. Down: 1 Cinch; 2 Almost; 3 Act; 4 Spring; 5 Inherit; 8 Testate; 11 Enlarge; 13 Several; 15 Aligns; 16 Oddity; 17 Crone; 20 Set. QUICK - Across: 6 Forlorn; 7 Vixen; 9 Prime; 10 Counsel; 12 Expostulate; 14 Extravagant; 18 Flowing; 19 Spate; 21 Fiery; 22 Deficit. Down: 1 Lorry; 2 Climax; 3 Orb; 4 Signal; 5 Memento; 8 Cottage; 11 Convene; 13 Explain; 15 Reward; 16 Napkin; 17 Attic; 20 Few.

Quiz

1. Who was born Maria Eva Duarte?
2. Of which bird is the European redwing a variety?
3. Tornado Alley lies between which two US mountain ranges?
4. How many cards are there in a tarot deck?
5. In which US state are the towns Norman and Enid?
6. Which London attraction has its own police force?
7. In which mythology was Marduk the creator of Earth and humans?
8. Which sea bird is also called the solan goose?
9. What is the study of crops and soils called?
10. In which country was Alcoholics Anonymous set up in 1934?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Lobster; 2 Franz Liszt; 3 Kookaburra; 4 Alva; 5 Peter Sellers; 6 Pontefract; 7 Seaweed; 8 A lizard; 9 Table tennis; 10 Walter Mitty.

Niner: DRUMSTICK

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

3213476 gives a fabric,
578571 gives a cloth,
986219 gives a fur.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Early days but worth a second look

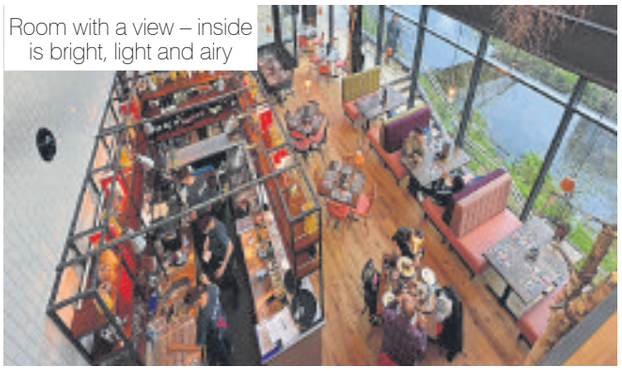
IT'S always exciting to try out a new restaurant for the first time and even better when it's a cosy dinner for two.

On a visit to M&S in Stafford I spotted Zizzi was opening opposite the store in the new Riverside complex.

I was eager to visit as many moons ago they had an amazing dish on the menu, Pasta Genovese with green beans and pesto (if I remember correctly).

The opening date was shrouded in mystery and I watched patiently as the dining space gradually took shape behind the huge glass windows.

It opened a couple of weeks before Christmas (good marketing) on a day where thick snow blanketed the land. We'd booked a table for that very evening. It was quite busy considering the conditions.



Room with a view – inside is bright, light and airy

Shroom for more – the porcini giganti tortelloni

OVERLOOKING

We were welcomed warmly and shown to a table upstairs which was more of a mezzanine level overlooking the dining area downstairs. It was toasty warm and there was a convivial buzz in the air. The furnishings were tasteful and retroesque in their styling. It was an intimate table meaning we could gaze into each other's eyes without putting off the other diners. The taste of Italy also holds a special place in our hearts as it was the scene of a rather romantic proposal.

The menu was vast with plenty of nibbles, starters and mains to choose from including pasta, pizza, risotto, along with baked dishes too. I scoured the dishes but alas, Pasta Genovese was a thing of the past. I was keen to try something new and to have a more interesting starter than just garlic bread. It's a staple in our household with most meals.

I decided on the arancini – risotto balls with mozzarella, peas and a breadcrumb coating served with a red pepper tapenade dip – and bullied him into ordering the 'little soul' bread, doughy puffs baked with garlic and smoked sea salt they come with two hummus-style dips.

A bottle of red wine was also on the agenda. We went for the Nero D'avola, Sicilia, a bargain for restaurant wine at £14.95 and it tasted pretty smooth. The waitress was bubbly, polite and helpful and while it was clear that the staff were still finding their feet, everything seemed to be running like clockwork.

The starters arrived in just the right amount of time and we decided to share them so we could sample both. The little soul bread was lovely, light and fluffy with a gorgeous golden crispy crust. The arancini balls were a little bit disappointing for me at least. He liked them.

One of the reasons I'd picked them was the mention of peas but I couldn't really taste any so that was a bit of a blow. The tepenade was full-bodied, sweet and very tasty, perfect with the salty cheese flavour.

The mains were on their way and once dishes were cleared and wine topped up and chatter resumed they arrived piping hot and decent sized portions too.

He'd gone for an Italian classic lasagne and I'd decided on something different, the porcini giganti – giant tortelloni pockets filled with ricotta and porcini mushrooms in a creamy wild mushroom sauce with baby spinach, crispy sage and riserva cheese.

He was delighted as the lasagne was creamy, tomatoey with an explosion of herbs and seasoned meat in every mouthful. But once again I had ordered badly on this evening.

The pasta was a bit too heavy going. The filling a little dry as if it had been overcooked. It was very mushroomy which overpowered any flavour of spinach or ricotta which was a shame as they were my favourite elements.

We'd also gone for a side of herby potatoes which were gorgeous a nice amount of oil and herbs and perfectly-cooked fluffy spud.

We didn't order dessert, no room, although there were some tempting choices, and requested the bill.

Unfortunately we were left sat with our plates until the end which wasn't great but as it was opening night these are things we could overlook. Perhaps the chef was still learning the dishes and the waitresses learning the ropes. But the ambience and service more than made up for this. We walked off our meal with trek home through the snow and I'm hoping for second time luckier for my meal!

LISA WILLIAMS

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Semi-detached family home in a central location

A spacious three-bedroomed semi-detached family home in a prestigious central location, 34 St James's Road, Dudley, lies within walking distance of Dudley Town Centre.

It is for sale through Trinity Property at £199,950 with no chain.

To the front, the driveway to the front of the property leads to the porch and provides parking for two cars in front of the single garage.

Once inside the property the hallway has stairs to the first floor and opens to two good sized reception rooms, a downstairs WC and dining room with further access to the kitchen at the rear.

Upstairs there are three good sized bedrooms (two doubles and one single) with a house bathroom/WC/wet room.

Outside, the rear garden is terraced with two patio areas accessed by steps. There is side access to the front of the property. The selling agents are expecting a great deal of interest to be shown in the sale of this property, and viewings are highly recommended.

In more detail this is a spacious family home in a prestigious, central location.

With two reception rooms, they have been extended to the rear. The bedrooms are all of a good size.

The home is in need of some slight cosmetic updating, said a spokesman for the selling agents.

The front reception room has an attractive bay window and a beamed ceiling, plus a fireplace. The rear reception room also has a fireplace and the kitchen has traditional light-wood-effect units and contrasting cream-coloured working surfaces.

The rear garden comes with a lovely wooded backdrop.

Trinity Property bring a fresh, friendly and honest approach to selling, buying and letting property within the Dudley and Stourbridge area. Offering free market appraisals, great EPC prices, all aspects of property letting and management; they are based in central Dudley and cover Kingswinford, Wordsley, Netherton, Sedgley, Tipton and Tividale and more, with a business built on recommendation.

DUDLEY £199,950

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Trinity Property
TEL: 01384 213395
EMAIL: dudley@trinityproperty.net

KEY FEATURES

Semi-detached
3 bedrooms
2 reception rooms
Dining room & kitchen
No chain

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Bungalow is well placed for amenities

KINGSWINFORD
£239,950

In a superb cul-de-sac position, this very well presented detached bungalow in Maidensbridge Drive, Wall Heath, Kingswinford, is for sale through Taylors estate agents at £239,950.

It is well placed for village shops and amenities and is further complemented by a level, sunny and private rear garden, which is easy to maintain. The accommodation has a generous and well-proportioned layout, all of which is very well maintained throughout and includes both gas central heating and double glazing. It has an entrance porch, large reception hall, a generous lounge which overlooks the private rear garden, a breakfast kitchen, a lean-to conservatory, two double bedrooms (master with fitted wardrobes) and a shower room with a separate WC.

Call Taylors estate agents on 01384 401777.

Awesome views from stunning bungalow

KINGSWINFORD
£174,950 <<<

This stunning three-bedroomed bungalow in Ragees Road, Kingswinford, has awesome views.

Redecorated throughout and having a tiered rear garden, it is for sale through loveyourpostcode.com at offers in excess of £174,950. It is also available to rent. Please ask for details from the agents.

Its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hall, a living room, kitchen, conservatory, three bedrooms and a bathroom, a driveway and a garden.

A spokesman for the selling agent said: "This lovely detached bungalow offers off-road parking, three bedrooms and all the views you could want."

The agents are expecting a lot of interest.

Contact loveyourpostcode.com on 0800 862 0870.

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Also at Stourbridge and Halesowen

LOWER GORNAL, Water Road

Well presented, EXTENDED DETACHED within walking distance of GORNAL VILLAGE. Benefiting from having NO UPWARD CHAIN and drive offering ample parking, this good-sized family home boasts; porch, hallway, breakfast-kitchen, living room, conservatory, guest W/C, FIVE BEDROOMS, family bathroom, separate W/C, and gas central heating with enclosed rear garden. VIEWING IS ESSENTIAL. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £259,950

DUDLEY, Balmoral View, Milking Bank

ABSOLUTELY OUTSTANDING, exceptionally well presented, stylish. Freehold, gas centrally heated, part double glazed detached set in favoured neighbourhood where a personal inspection is imperative for total appreciation. Superb accommodation includes; entrance hallway, elegant lounge, dining room & double glazed CONSERVATORY beyond, upgraded kitchen with a fine range of units, store. Three bedrooms (principal bedroom with fitted units), tiled bathroom. Lengthy garage, delightful garden. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £190,000

LOWER GORNAL, Water Road

Enviably situated within walking distance of the village a conscientiously maintained gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed individual detached family home offering further potential. Accommodation comprises reception hall, store, kitchen with UPVC double glazed utility room beyond, transverse living/dining room. Gallery landing, three generous bedrooms, bathroom, separate toilet, integral garage, delightful gardens. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY.

Offers in excess of £190,000

KINGSWINFORD, Park Lane

An OUSTANDING, BRAND NEW and SUBSTANTIAL DETACHED DORMER BUNGALOW within walking distance of the park, sought after schools and amenities. The accommodation is VERSATILE, INCREDIBLY SPACIOUS and APPOINTED TO A VERY HIGH SPECIFICATION throughout, includes a 10 WARRANTY and offers a flexible THREE/ FOUR BEDROOM layout. With three car driveway and a broad and private rear garden. EPC TBA

£449,500

GORNAL WOOD , Himley Road

NOW COMPLETED- recently constructed, gas centrally heated, double glazed, FOUR BEDROOM family residence. Offering a 'first-quality' design this distinctive home comprises. porch, hall, cloakroom, study, living room, transverse 24 ft (hub of the house) dining kitchen (with French doors out to garden) and a fine range of units/integrated appliances. Gallery landing, four bedrooms (principal bedroom with shower room ensuite), bathroom, garden, 3 car parking. SEDGLEY OFFICE. SAP: B

Offers in the region of £295,000

GORNAL/BRIERLEY HILL, Barratts Croft

An OUTSTANDING DETACHED FAMILY HOME with a full width two storey front extension, enjoying a secluded position with front/ side drive/parking, plus GARAGE and an ATTRACTIVELY LANDSCAPED and SECLUDED REAR GARDEN, offering IMMACULATELY PRESENTED layout which includes FOUR WELL PROPORTIONED BEDROOMS, with en-suite. EPC C

£265,000

WORDSLEY, Belle Vue

●Open Viewing● Sat 24th Feb 11am-1pm● - £1000 VENDORS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS MOVING COSTS - With a LARGE and BEAUTIFULLY LAID OUT PRIVATE REAR GARDEN, BACKING ONTO KING GEORGE V PARK, this HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL DETACHED FAMILY HOME is set back beyond the GENEROUS FRONT DRIVEWAY with GARAGE and offers FOUR GOOD BEDROOMS, with en-suite shower room. EPC D

Open day £259,950

COSELEY, Ivyhouse Lane

A wonderfully presented DETACHED family home located in the popular Coseley area. As well as having gas central heating and double glazing this delightful property also benefits from; porch, hall, guest W/C, through lounge, snug/ sitting room, dining-kitchen, utility room, Conservatory. FOUR BEDROOMS, family bathroom, attractive enclosed rear garden and driveway offering ample parking to front. Viewing Essential EPC: TBA SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £249,950

KINGSWINFORD, Summer Street

A STUNNING & VERY LARGE SEMI DETACHED FAMILY HOME, close to village shops/ amenities. The accommodation is incredibly spacious, BEAUTIFULLY APPOINTED throughout and includes THREE LARGE BEDROOMS. With BROAD DRIVEWAY and to the rear enjoying a VERY LARGE LEVEL GARDEN with SUBSTANTIAL SUMMER HOUSE. EPC C.

£239,950

KINGSWINFORD, Kendall Rise

A SUBSTANTIALLY EXTENDED SEMI-DETACHED FAMILY HOME with a VERY LARGE SECLUDED REAR GARDEN, offering a BEAUTIFULLY PRESENTED and VERY GENEROUS layout, including THREE LARGE DOUBLE BEDROOMS (may split to create four/ five bedroom layout if desired). With full width block paved driveway and includes a LARGE GARAGE. EPC E

New price £214,950

UPPER GORNAL, Eve Lane

Nearing completion; SPACIOUS, gas centrally heated (underfloor & radiator), double glazed DETACHED house planned to take advantage of sloping site comprising; THREE BEDROOMS (one with shower room en suite), bathroom, and to the Lower Ground Floor a cloakroom together with 25'9" through kitchen/ living/dining room (with bi-fold doors to one entire elevation) with a superb range of fittings. THREE CAR PARKING TO REAR (Off Vicarage Road). SAP: C SEDGLEY

New price WAS £215,000,NOW £210,000

KINGSWINFORD, Ashdale Close

Enjoying a secluded location, overlooking the open Green opposite, this LINK DETACHED FAMILY HOME whilst close to amenities, offers an EXTREMELY WELL PROPORTIONED layout which includes THREE EXCELLENT SIZED BEDROOMS. With an EASY MAINTENANCE LANDSCAPED GARDEN, rear DRIVEWAY and GARAGE. EPC D

New price £189,950

COSELEY, Greenoak Crescent, Bramford estate

Conscientiously maintained, freehold, gas centrally heated, double glazed semi detached with potential situated at head of cul-de-sac comprising; porch, reception hall, store, lounge with bay, dining room with patio doors, kitchen, three bedrooms, shower room (formally bathroom) with white suite, garage, utility room, garden, block paved drive. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £150,000

COSELEY, Birmingham New Road

Conscientiously maintained, Freehold, gas centrally heated, uPVC double glazed semi detached most conveniently situated within reasonable distance of day-to-day amenities, bus/ railway transport routes etc. & comprising; porch, hall, lounge, transverse 19 ft dining kitchen (patio doors out to garden), pantry, utility room, separate w.c. Three bedrooms, bathroom. Garage, delightful garden. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £135,000

PENSNETT, Tansey Green Road

Within this exclusive cul de sac section of this sought after address, this MODERN TWO BEDROOM MID TERRACE HOUSE offers a well presented layout including a CONSERVATORY, plus an ALLOCATED PARKING SPACE and a landscaped low maintenance garden. EPC C

Now available £129,950

NETHERTON, Ryan Place

A fantastically presented traditional terraced property ideally suited for the first time buyers or people looking to downsize. Located on a quiet cul-de-sac location and benefiting from gas central heating and double glazing as well as living room, dining room, attractive modern fitted kitchen, TWO BEDROOMS, stunning shower room, with enclosed rear garden and parking to front. This property is offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. SEDGLEY EPC: D

Offers in the region of £104,950

WOLVERHAMPTON, Park Hall Road, Goldthorn Park

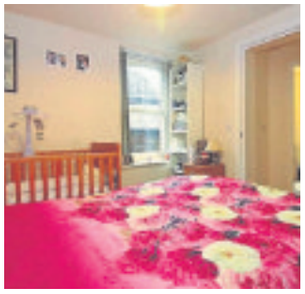
This well-proportioned ground floor apartment is located in the popular Goldthorn Park area of Wolverhampton. Consisting of good-sized entrance hall, living room, fitted-kitchen, TWO BEDROOMS, bathroom. Offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC Rating C. SEDGLEY.

PRICE: £75,000

TIPTON, Thunderbolt Way

An extremely well presented ground floor apartment located on a popular modern development in Tipton. With entrance hallway and TWO BEDROOMS this property also benefits from open-plan lounge-kitchen, fitted shower room, double glazing and electric heating, parking space and is offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC: D SEDGLEY

New price WAS £75,000, NOW £70,000



Superb duplex home is part of a hospital conversion

WORDSLEY
£113,950 <<<

This incredibly deceptively spacious duplex ground floor apartment in Marshall Crescent, Wordsley, is for sale through Taylors Estate Agents at £113,950.

Combining wonderful period features including high ceilings and tall sash windows with a sought-after setting, this property lies within the successful conversion of the former Wordsley Hospital heritage buildings.

Its accommodation briefly comprises of a private ground floor entrance to a reception hall, a large open plan lounge through to a breakfast kitchen with appliances.

The lower ground floor includes a hallway with an excellent double bedroom and walk-in wardrobe off plus a spacious bathroom. This is all set within well maintained gardens including a car parking space.

Call 01384 401777.

A unique and spacious home

HALESOWEN
£370,000

New to the property market, this most unique and extremely spacious detached family sized bungalow in Gleads Croft, Halesowen, lies in a quiet cul-de-sac position.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley estate agents at £370,000.

The property has extremely flexible accommodation suitable for family use and comprises a large lounge, a spacious fully fitted dining kitchen, three bedrooms all with en suite facilities, a large further reception room/games room, a guest cloakroom with a sauna and a study leading to conservatory. There is also a large tandem garage with an electric roller shutter door and gardens.

Contact Hicks Hadley on 0121 585 6667.

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27 DUDLEY ROAD, SEDGLEY — O/A £649,950
•Exceptional individual detached family home, Set within well tended walled gardens
•Spacious five bedroom accommodation over three floors
•Impressive conservatory, three reception rooms, high quality fittings throughout
•Extensive breakfast kitchen, utility room and playroom
•EPC RATING C

'WOODBINE COTTAGE', 73 STOURBRIDGE ROAD, HAGLEY — £325,000
•Attractive double fronted end of terrace cottage
•Bedroom one with en-suite shower room, two further bedrooms
•Well maintained & improved double glazed accommodation
•Car parking to side of property with easily maintained rear garden
•EPC RATING D

NEW
NO UPWARD CHAIN

2 LEY RISE, SEDGLEY — £210,000
•Modern detached house occupying a corner plot
•Situated on the popular Northway housing estate
•Well proportioned three bedroom accommodation
•Private rear garden
•EPC RATING E

7 BOUNDARY CRESCENT, LOWER GORNAL — £187,500
•Extended & considerably improved semi detached house
•Well maintained accommodation with three bedrooms plus attic room
•Added benefit of a sun room, bar, utility area and sauna room
•Rear garden with decking on two levels and swimming pooL
•EPC RATING D

NEW

2 LINLEY GROVE, GORNAL WOOD — £179,500
•Semi detached house with three bedrooms
•Pleasant & convenient residential cul-de-sac location
•Well maintained and improved accommodation
•Through lounge and dining area, easily maintained gardens
•EPC RATING C

NEW

37 DALESWOOD PARK, ROMSLEY — £139,950
•New park home enviably positioned on a hard landscaped plot with ample patio areas
•Overlooking adjoining woodland within a semi rural locality
•Contemporary accommodation with open plan living room, dining/kitchen area
•Two bedrooms with built in wardrobes, shower room with large walk in shower
•Daleswood Park is a small park home site, designated for owner occupiers only

NO UPWARD CHAIN

109 DUDLEY ROAD, SEDGLEY — O/A £114,950
•Well presented & improved mid terraced house
•Two bedrooms plus attic bedroom
•Two reception rooms & enlarged kitchen
•First floor bathroom with jacuzzi bath
•EPC RATING E

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458 HIMLEY ROAD DUDLEY
Guide Price £100,000
•Character Gornal Wood cottage with footpath access only to the front
•Occupying a level garden plot with potential for extension and improvement
•Approached from Himley Road over an unmade driveway
•Pleasant cottage gardens
•NO PROVISION FOR OFF ROAD PARKING
•EPC RATING F

NEW

45 GOODRICH MEWS UPPER GORNAL
£100,000
•Modern first floor apartment
•Two bedrooms
•Lounge/dining room
•Telephone entry system
•Two car parking spaces
•Convenient location
•EPC RATING B

BUILDING PLOT ADJ 54 DEEPDALE LANE — £98,000
GORNAL
•Individual building plot
•Planning consent for a five bedroom detached dwelling
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MOTORING | YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO THE BEST CARS ON THE MARKET

Land Rover charges to Heaven's Gate with Range Rover Sport PHEV

A British car maker takes the new, electrified Range Rover Sport up the 999-step Dragon Road in China, becoming the first vehicle to drive to Heaven's Gate.

Land Rover has scaled one of China's toughest mountains using nothing more than a showroom-spec version of its latest high-performance SUV.

The Range Rover Sport PHEV is the first vehicle to reach the Heaven's Gate landmark top of Tianmen Mountain, having first taken on a treacherous seven-mile road — known locally as Dragon's Road —before climbing 999 steps and navigating 99 turns to reach its final destination.

Not a single modification was made to the vehicle, with the showroom-ready SUV simply utilising the Terrain Response 2 system to reach the top – piloted by Formula E driver Ho-Pin Tung, of Panasonic Jaguar Racing.

Ho-Pin Tung said: "I've experienced Formula E, Formula 1 and won at the 24 Hours of Le Mans but this was without doubt one of the most demanding driving challenges I've ever faced. The Range Rover Sport PHEV performed brilliantly as it inspired real confidence on the mountain road and climbed the stairs up to Heaven's Gate effortlessly."

Phil Jones, Land Rover Experience expert, said: "This was the hardest Range Rover Sport challenge I've ever been involved with because, until we reached the top, we couldn't categorically say we would succeed.

Taking on the 999-step Dragon Road in China in a showroom-spec PHEV SUV

By making it to the summit, we've proven the phenomenal capability of the Range Rover Sport plug-in hybrid like never before – with a genuine world first."

It's the not the first time Land Rover has used its vehicles to take on daring challenges. The firm took on the Pikes Peak hill climb in 2013 using a petrol Range Rover Sport, setting a record time for production SUVs.

The Range Rover Sport PHEV, for which UK order books are now open, is powered by a hybrid drivetrain consisting of a four-cylinder petrol engine and an 85kW electric motor. It develops a total of 398bhp and 640Nm of torque, capable of taking the car from 0-60mph in 6.5 seconds and up to a top speed of 137mph.

Prices start at £70,800.

The Range Rover Sport PHEV is the first vehicle to reach the Heaven's Gate landmark

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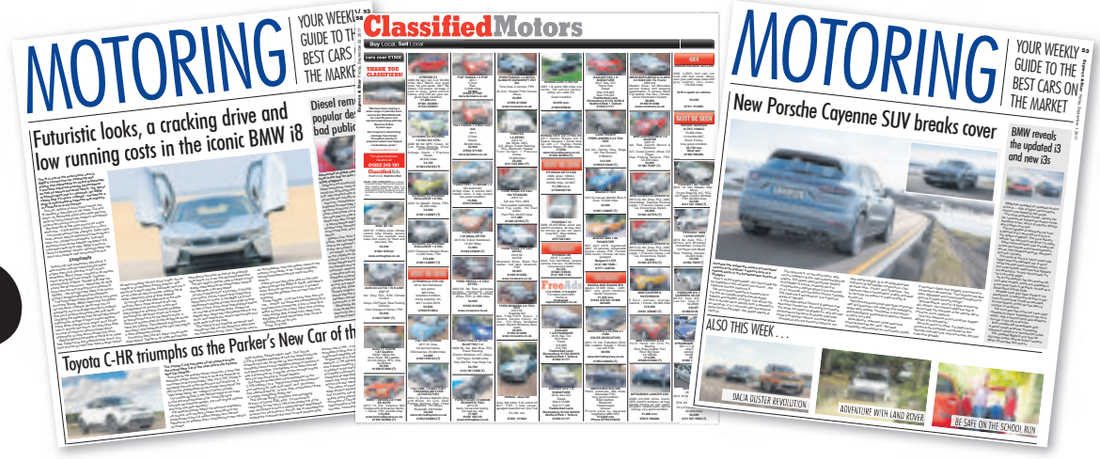

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MOTORING

Express & Star

Dudley Chronicle Thursday, February 22, 2018

Brand new compact SUV now on Motability scheme

MG ZS joins the Motability scheme

MG Motor UK's brand-new compact-SUV, the MG ZS, is now available to lease on the Motability scheme, meaning you could drive away in the stylish SUV from as little as a £45 advanced payment.

On offer for the advanced payment, and 100 per cent of the weekly allowance, the MG ZS is available to people on the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMC DLA), the Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (ERMC PIP) or the Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP) schemes. In addition, the MG ZS can be leased at a similarly competitive rate for people on the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement (WPMS).

Available on Motability at Excite and Exclusive trim levels, in both manual and automatic transmissions, the MG ZS comes packed with 'extras' as standard. An industry-leading 8" touch sensitive infotainment screen is supported by DAB radio (on the Exclusive and Excite models), while Bluetooth hands-free and remote central locking is available across the range. Cruise control is also included, while air conditioning comes as standard on Excite and Exclusive models, and Satellite Navigation and a rear camera are standard on the Exclusive variant.

Harvey France, spokesperson for MG Motor UK, said: "Over two-thirds of the dealerships in the MG network have a Motability-trained specialist as part of their team.

"They are on hand to provide expert advice to customers and we are actively supporting other dealerships to install a trained member of staff. We strongly believe in Motability, and it is a great initiative that we are proud to be a part of."

The addition of the MG ZS means the whole MG range is now available on the Motability scheme. Customers can also choose from the spacious MG GS SUV, or the stylish Supermini, the MG3, which is the best value car on the scheme.

For more information about the Motability scheme, or to book a test drive, visit: www.mg.co.uk/motability/

Latest Megane R.S. feels at home both on road and track

By Jack Evans

The Megane R.S. has been one of the most crucial hot hatches in the segment for some time now, and here we find ourselves in the latest generation.

With its predecessors regarded as some of the finest-handling hatches of all time, the new Megane R.S. has a lot to live up to, but Renault hopes that thanks to a range of new technologies and chassis enhancements this version will be the best yet. However, there are now more competitors than ever for it to take on, making the Megane R.S.'s job even trickier.

There's quite a lot going on underneath the Megane's muscular styling. We've now got four-wheel steering, a powerful turbocharged bonnet and – enthusiasts rejoice – the choice of either a dual-clutch automatic or six-speed manual gearbox.

Responsive

Renault says that this latest R.S. features more influence from its learning in motorsport than ever before. Engineers from the firm's F1 team even helped those developing the Megane's engine, ensuring that it was as responsive as possible – despite being turbocharged.

The exterior has also been beefed up, as have the chassis and brakes. In all, it's designed to be the most involving Megane R.S. yet. There's the choice of either Sport or Cup chassis too, with the former more road-ready and the latter aimed at those who want to use their Megane on track.

The new Megane R.S. is powered by a 1.8-litre turbocharged petrol engine – the same as the one you'll find in the Alpine A110 sports car. Here, it produces 278bhp and 390Nm, which enables the Megane to hit 60mph in 5.6 seconds before topping out at 155mph.

As we mentioned, two transmissions are available – a dual-clutch automatic or a six-speed manual. However, the biggest change comes elsewhere. The new Megane now features all-wheel steering – a first for the hot-hatch segment. At speeds of up to 37mph, both the front and rear wheels turn in the same direction, affording the car better high-speed stability. At low speed, they move in opposite directions, and this means the car can turn more sharply than with a conventional set-up.

A hot hatch needs to be sharp, nimble and, most of all, fun to drive. In most respects the Megane R.S. ticks these boxes. The 1.8-litre engine feels punchy at low speeds yet has a willingness to be revved out too. It sounds characterful enough as well, though only when switched into all-out 'Race' driving mode – in regular modes it's pretty muted. The handling is sharp, with perhaps a little too much artificial weight added in racier modes, but the four-wheel steering does make the car particularly agile in the bends – and it'll happily begin to rotate on a lifted throttle, but it never becomes scary or difficult to drive.

Megane R.S. is a huge amount of fun to drive – and that's one of the key things you need with any hot hatch

There are some niggles, however – the gearshift paddles are mounted just slightly too high on the steering wheel, while the brake pedal lacks a degree of bite under the first inches of travel.

Despite being based on a rather run-of-the-mill hatchback, the R.S. manages to look impressive in the metal. The arches have been fleshed out at both the front and rear, while small touches such as air vents just behind the front wheels and a large hexagonal exhaust surround help differentiate the R.S. from the regular Megane. Certainly, there were few people we passed while on our southern Spain test route who didn't stop to stare at the Renault – and that's exactly the effect that hot hatches should have.

The R.S. moniker has always been an indication of truly sporty cars, and enthusiasts instantly recognise the level of tuning and mechanical enhancement that it represents – a feature that can't quickly be attained but has to be earned over time.

Those looking for a flamboyant, over-the-top interior may have to look in other directions than the Renault Megane R.S. For the most part, though, it's a pleasant place to be – the sports seats are hugely comfortable with plenty of support and adjustment, while the seating position itself is spot-on. The materials throughout are decent enough, with only a few low-rent plastics on the dashboard and around the infotainment system spoiling the overall effect.

A hot hatch needs to be usable on a daily basis, after all, so it's handy that the Megane R.S. features both decent rear-seat legroom and an impressively large boot. It means that those who plan on using their hot hatch every day – as they should be – won't get caught short in terms of practicality.

The Megane R.S. benefits from quite a lot of standard equipment. Central to the cabin's design is the large 8.7-inch infotainment screen, which houses satellite navigation and media functions. One of the cleverest functions it features is the RS Monitor. This allows drivers to connect a dash cam or smartphone to the system and film their laps on track.

Then, the car's in-board telemetrics can overlay details such as speed and G-reading on to the footage, which can then be uploaded to the internet.

The screen itself looks good, but unfortunately small icons make it a little hard to navigate – and are particularly annoying when you're trying to do something as simple as input a destination into the navigation.

The Megane R.S. is a little bit of a mixed bag. The engine, chassis and ride are all impressive. The 1.8-litre unit is responsive and pulls hard throughout the rev range, while the Sport chassis is just well judged enough for the road.

However, a few niggles such as the infotainment system and oddly placed gearshift paddles do bring things down. That said, the Megane R.S. is still a huge amount of fun to drive – and that's one of the key things you need with any hot hatch.

● Renault Megane R.S. Price: £30,000 (est)

Testing time for Michelin tyres – first report

By John Griffiths

We British are a little obsessed with the weather: probably because we have so much of it and it affects our lives in so many ways.

One of these, of course, is driving: particularly the effect varying conditions have on our grip on the road and therefore our safety.

We may have only a few days of snow and slush a year, but will have witnessed how this can bring the country to a near standstill.

Tyre manufacturers and some safety organisations recommend fitting winter, or snow, tyres as soon as there's a serious chill in the air.

But bearing the mind the cost of buying them, and changing four tyres twice a year, is it really worth it?

The problem is winter tyres are specifically designed for use in temperatures less than seven degrees C: any higher, and in dry conditions, their performance drops off, they wear much more quickly and may result in increased road noise.

The answer may be cross-climate tyres, designed with unique tread patterns and compounds to give you best of both worlds performance for traction in all weathers and at all temperatures.

CrossClimate

I have been trying a set of Michelin CrossClimate tyres on my supermini: the latest CrossClimate + aren't available for my 14-inch wheels.

In independent tests, the CrossClimate scored highly against a range of other brands for traction and braking in snow, good wet weather performance and very short braking distances in dry conditions – qualifying it as a top all-weather tyre,

The difference after fitting the Michelins (my car was previously shod with a popular, mid-range standard brand) was instantly noticeable: particularly the steering which felt more positive and accurate, with less of a tendency towards oversteer on faster corners.

The improvement is equally noticeable in the dry or the wet, an impression borne out by an independent comparison of similar tyres.

Getting to and from my home, which is on a hill, was also trouble-free thanks to the new tyres.

The CrossClimates were also noticeably quieter than the standard tures they replaced, and provided a more supple ride.

This combination of performance characteristics is due to the joint action of three key innovations: an innovative tread rubber compound, a unique tread pattern, and high performance sipes or groves.

The 'V' tread pattern maximizes the clawing effect on the snow throughout the tyre's life, and contributes to the improved life of the tyre.

How well they do, and how my fuel consumption is affected, will be the subject of a later report.

Volvo's new compact SUV the XC40 is a breath of fresh air

Volvo's bold corporate grille dominates the front

By Tom Wiltshire

The XC40 is Volvo's new compact SUV – and note that the company calls it an SUV, and not a crossover. With high ground clearance, four-wheel drive available and "the proportions of an SUV", this is less of a jacked-up hatchback and more of a scaled-down XC60.

The new baby of the Volvo range is also the brand's first entrant into this massively popular market sector, and with its fashion-led design it aims straight at the heart of the territory the Range Rover Evoque has occupied so well.

We had the opportunity to sample both T5 petrol and D4 diesel models, both mated to eight-speed automatic gearboxes. The 2.0-litre petrol, though smooth and powerful, is noisy when pressed, and with high fuel consumption it's unlikely to be a big seller.

Instead, Volvo expects the bulk of sales to come from diesel models. Though grumbly at low speeds, the diesel engine soon quiets down at a cruise, and with 187bhp on tap it has more than enough shove for cutthroat city driving or long motorway journeys.

Initially, these will be the only two engines available, though later in 2018 Volvo will launch lower-powered engines – a 148bhp D3 diesel and 154bhp and 187bhp T3 and T3 petrols. All but T3 and D3 engines are offered with standard all-wheel drive and eight-speed autos – lower powered engines get front-wheel drive and six-speed manual gearboxes.

The boot is decently large at 460 litres

Ride comfort is excellent, even on the optional 19-inch wheels of our test car.

Volvo's bold corporate grille dominates the front, flanked by eye-catching 'Thors Hammer' LED daytime running lights. Standard LED headlights ensure even base-spec Momentum cars look premium.

Step into an XC40 from a Range Rover Evoque and you'll be floored. The Volvo's interior is a genuinely lovely place to be, with great-quality materials and superbly comfortable seats even on base-spec cars.

The centre console is arranged around Volvo's nine-inch portrait-oriented touchscreen infotainment system. It's slick and works well. The company's main goal for the XC40's interior was to carve out storage spaces wherever possible – and it's achieved it. There's even a superbly engineered 'curry hook', which folds down from the glovebox to keep your Tikka Masala safely hung up rather than slopping around on the floor.

The clever touches continue in the boot, with a multifunctional false floor that can hide the parcel shelf, hang up bags and keep shopping from rolling around all at the same time. The boot itself is decently large at 460 litres, while six-footers will be able to sit comfortably in the rear.

Equipment levels are impressive. All cars come with LED headlights, navigation and a 12.3-inch digital dial display. Three trim levels will be on offer in the UK – base-spec Momentum, sporty R-Design and flagship Inscription. Each also gains a 'Pro' variant, aimed at fleet buyers who may want choice equipment without delving into the options list.

The XC40 is a breath of fresh air in a market sector that's quickly becoming bloated. It's neat exterior and wonderful interior are sure to earn it admiring glances, and it's every bit as impressive on the road as its main rivals. Generous standard equipment and a predicted class-leading residual value is great too.

Model: Volvo XC40 D4. Price as tested: £35,705

● The new Volvo is available at Volvo in Stourbridge. The dealership won the National Dealer of the year award for Volvo Cars UK. The Volvo First Class 2017 Dealer of the Year is determined using key performance indicators from a variety of measures including new car sales, used car sales, parts and accessories sales and customer satisfaction.

● Volvo Stourbridge, Grange Lane, DY9 7HH. Tel: 01384 893966

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2012/12 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6i 16V SRi VX-LINE 5-dr, White, 47,490 miles £7,850

2009/59 KIA SPORTAGE 2.0 XE 2WD 5-dr 4x4, Black, 18,445 miles £7,750

2008/08 HYUNDAI SANTA FE 2.2 CRTD CDX 5-dr 4x4, Black, 50,272 miles £6,995

2012/61 MINI 1.6 COOPER LONDON 3-dr, Black, A/C, Alloys, 42,110 miles £6,995

2007/56 RENAULT MEGANE 2.0T 16V RENAULTSPORT 230 F1 TEAM R6, 3-dr, Liquid Yellow, 62,245 miles £6,695

2013/13 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.2 LIMITED EDITION 3-dr, White, 56,400 miles £6,495

2008/58 NISSAN QASHQAI 1.5 DCi ACENTA 5-dr, Sandblast, 84,649 miles £4,995

2008/08 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4i 16V SXi 5-dr, Silver Lightning, 62,258 miles £3,995

2003/03 MAZDA MX-5 1.6i 2-dr Convertible, Green, 67,018 miles £3,295

2006/06 PEUGEOT 206 1.4 VERVE 5-dr, 49,220 miles £2,995

2012/62 LAND ROVER RANGE ROVER EVOQUE 2.2 eD4 PURE
5-dr Estate, 2WD, White, Full Leather, 38,800 miles
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3-dr, 13,000 miles, Great Spec
£9,350

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3-dr, Green, 16,000 miles
£8,995

2012/12 BMW X3 XDRIVE 20D SE
5-dr Estate, White, 46,000 miles
£15,590

2015/15 SUBARU XV 2.0D SE
5-dr, White, 27,000 miles
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Vauxhall's new Insignia Grand Tourer majors on a few things including value

The DS 7 Crossback is a genuine rival to big-selling rivals

Volvo's XC40 is a handsome-looking off-roader with a lovely interior

These are some of the best cars you can buy in March on new 18 plate

On March 1 we say goodbye to the 67 number plate and hello to 18. If you're looking for a new car, it's a great time to buy to get that extra new feeling.

But what should you buy? We've looked back at the best cars to be released since the last plate change in September – with everything from hatchbacks to SUV and electric vehicles to diesel pick-up trucks, there's sure to be something for everyone.

AUDI A5 SPORTBACK

If you're after a spacious, relatively practical saloon car with coupe looks, then the Audi A5 Sportback is the one for you. With a range of economical yet powerful diesel and petrol engines to choose from, as well as a variety of exterior trims and colours, it's one of the best all-rounders on sale today. The interior is, as you'd expect, solidly built too.

BMW X2

The BMW X2 sees the German manufacturer entering into the ever-flourishing compact crossover market. What does it bring to the table? Sportier dynamics, for one. In addition, the X2's premium cabin will find favour with those who like a little more luxury in their crossover, while that all-important badge appeal is there in spades.

CITROEN C3 AIRCROSS

Citroen's quirky past is well and truly back, and the C3 Aircross proves it – sitting in the conservative compact crossover sector, it stands out by virtue of its kooky styling and intriguing plastic 'Airbumps'. The interior is pretty quirky too, but it still works well as a family car – there's plenty of room, a range of efficient engines and some interesting kit, such as a built-in dashcam.

DS 7 CROSSBACK

DS Automobiles is the 'premium' arm of Citroen, and so far its products have been pretty poor. That's all changed with the DS 7 Crossback. It's hit the nail on the head with great value, an impressive driving experience, and near-German quality – it's a genuine rival to big-selling rivals from BMW and Audi.

FORD FIESTA

It's a hard task to replace one of the best-selling cars of all time – but that's exactly what Ford had to deal with when remaking the Fiesta. Ford managed to achieve just that, producing a new Fiesta which drives, looks and feels as sharp as the car it replaces. We're yet to see the fire-breathing ST version, if this base car is anything to go by it'll be a cracker.

HONDA CIVIC

The Civic is traditionally the safe and sensible choice in the family hatchback sector, but this new model turns that on its head. Longer, wider and much lower than the outgoing car, it's very stylish, and great to drive thanks to peppy engines and a fantastic manual gearshift. It's also very spacious – there's room for four adults and a class-leading boot. You can also opt for the fire-breathing Type R.

HYUNDAI I30N

When Hyundai announced that it would be making a powerful, front-wheel-drive hot hatch to rival the likes of the Volkswagen Golf GTI and Renault Megane RS, many thought that it would never work. However, now it's arrived, the i30N has proved to be an incredibly capable car, and one which can easily match more mainstream offerings. It's also far cheaper, yet comes with plenty of kit.

The Lexus LC is easily one of the most striking sports cars on sale today and has genuine grand touring ability

Ford's replacement of the highy successful Fiesta

The Audi A5 Sportback is spacious and relatively practical

INFINITI QX50

Sharply styled yet spacious, the car looks to conquer the competitive SUV market. The 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol engine features high-tech features, too; it can alter compression according to driver need – lowering when a more economical drive is needed or raising when performance is required. It's a clever feature, and one which Infiniti hopes will transform the fortunes of the QX50.

JAGUAR XF SPORTBRAKE

The Jaguar XF Sportbrake combines sleek, shooting-brake-style looks with plenty of practicality. A variety of neat storage touches ensure that the XF Sportbrake will be well-suited to family life, while a sporty drive means that winding country roads can be fun, too. An alternative to the likes of the BMW 3 Series Touring, this is one well worth considering.

KIA PICANTO

One of the most popular vehicles in the city segment, the new Picanto had a lot to live up to. It more than matched expectation, with solid interior materials and a refined drive ensuring the Picanto remained one of the best in class. Small capacity engines with a decent amount of power make the Picanto far more usable on the motorway than you'd expect, too.

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY

The Land Rover Discovery has, for some time, come to represent all-weather capability as well as decent interior comfort. The last generation car was hugely popular, so the new version came to market with plenty to live up to. It delivered in almost all respects, thanks to clever off-road technology as well as more space than ever before for its seven cabin occupants. Some questioned its styling, but you couldn't argue with its all-round ability.

LEXUS LC

The Lexus LC is easily one of the most striking sports cars on sale today. Available with either a hybrid engine or a powerful 5.0-litre V8, it blends sports car performance with genuine grand touring ability. A cutting-edge interior matches the sharp exterior looks, while small rear seats and a decent boot endow the LC with the ability to cross continents without breaking a sweat.

MERCEDES-AMG GT C ROADSTER

The Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster is a slightly softer, convertible version of the track-focused GT R. However, don't think it's a slouch – a 4.0-litre twin-turbocharged V8 provides a huge amount of power, while a sports exhaust gives it an intoxicating bellow. That softer suspension makes it a more comfortable long-distance cruiser, too.

MITSUBISHI ECLIPSE CROSS

Mitsubishi has revived the legendary Eclipse name — but this time, rather than an entry-level sports car, it's the firm's latest crossover with the aim of rivalling the likes of Nissan's Qashqai, Renault's Kadjar and Seat's Ateca. Could this be the car to revive Mitsubishi's less-than-stellar market performance as of late?

NISSAN LEAF

The second-generation version of the world's best-selling electric vehicle is a pretty big deal, and it doesn't disappoint. Nissan has massively improved its styling, reduced the price and increased the range, making EV life ever-more tempting. If you've been on the fence about electric cars, now could be the time to leap.

PEUGEOT 5008

The old 5008 was a traditional MPV, but its replacement model is an out-and-out SUV. Its striking looks mark it out from the competition, and it's a really handsome offering – while still unmistakably a Peugeot. Inside, it has seven seats and an innovative cockpit including Peugeot's high-set dials and centre console.

SEAT ARONA

The Seat Arona is the Spanish manufacturer's take on the compact SUV formula. It has the usual VW underpinnings, meaning guaranteed quality, but brings a bit of Spanish flair to the table. There's currently two engine choices on offer in different states of tune, as well as generous equipment levels.

SKODA KODIAQ

If you're after a seven-seat SUV, you have lots of options – but the Skoda Kodiaq is one of the best. It's probably one of the best family cars on the market today, with an incredibly practical interior and surprisingly dynamic drive. The mighty VW Group parts bin also lends it an excellent engine line-up and lots of interior kit.

VAUXHALL INSIGNIA SPORTS TOURER

The new Insignia Grand Tourer majors on a few things – sleek looks, big space, and impressive value. Opt for an entry-level petrol-powered car and this massive family estate will set you back less than any of the competition – and you wouldn't think it from the driver's seat.

VOLVO XC40

Volvo's smallest SUV brings all the features of the larger XC60 and XC90 to a more stylish, city-friendly package. The resulting XC40 is a handsome-looking off-roader with a lovely interior. It's packed full of innovation too – from a reworked dashboard to super-practical boot. Electric and hybrid versions are on their way.

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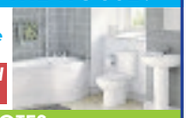

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It was the culmination of a remarkable journey for the charismatic young man from County Monaghan in Ireland. His sporting triumph is a story which brought the divided communities in the north of Ireland together. Today, McGuigan writes and commentates on the sport, runs the successful Cyclone Promotions Company and manages some of the world's best boxers.

Tickets for the event, which will also include a photo opportunity, are £25 and available from either behind the bar at the Irish Centre in Digbeth or online at www.shamrockevents.co.uk

Ben goes for boxing gold on Gold Coast

BLACK County boxing hope Ben Whittaker is off to the Commonwealth Games in Australia – and warned his rivals: "I'm going for gold on the Gold Coast."

The Darlaston fighter has been selected to represent England at the games which start Down Under in April and will fight in the 75kg category.

The 20-year-old said he couldn't wait to get out there and don the England vest. "We're due to fly out in mid-march for a training camp and to get acclimatised ahead of the games," he said. "I'm going for gold on the Gold Coast. I'm not looking for anything else other than a gold medal.

"I'm going there to win and let all the others worry about me – I know that if I box how I know I can then I'll be wearing a gold medal round my neck at the end," said Whittaker, who boxes out of Firewalker Boxing Club, in Wolverhampton.

Whittaker has also set his sights on the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo before turning professional.

FA investment offers grants to new teams

A £1.5 million FA investment will give aspiring grassroots footballers from two under-represented groups a greater chance of participation.

The Grow the Game programme, delivered by the Football Foundation and launched in 2010, offers grants to grassroots clubs that wish to create new teams. This year, applications are being encouraged from clubs that want to start female or disability teams.

Grow the Game grants help to reduce the costs associated with setting up new teams, with £1,500 available for each team a club creates. Funding can help pay for FA coaching courses, league affiliation costs, referees' fees, first aid kits and strips. Applications close on March 29. For details, clubs should contact their own County FA or visit the Football Foundation website.

Grow the Game is inclusive of players from different genders, ethnic backgrounds, faiths, ages, sexual orientations and those with disabilities. Applications that originate from, or provide for, under-represented communities are being encouraged.

James Lane, centre, of sponsors Homeserve Furniture Repairs Ltd, with, from left, club captain Jonathan Wright, chairman Mo Javaid, Naqaash Tahir and first XI skipper Ravi Nagra

Welcome to Old Hill – new signing Naqaash Tahir is a proven wicket-taker

Old Hill bid to make the long climb back

OLD HILL Cricket Club chairman Mo Javaid is determined to get the club on the front foot this summer

SPORT FEATURE

By Nick Elwell

The Haden Hill outfit have found themselves in a spin in recent years with back-to-back relegations meaning they will start this season in the bottom tier of the Birmingham League.

To cricket players and followers of a certain vintage that fact is difficult to comprehend. Old Hill are steeped in history and were one of the big-hitters on the club cricket scene.

During their halcyon days in the late 80s and early 90s they appeared in five National Knockout finals at Lord's and were triumphant on four occasions.

Troubled

They had a following that was the envy of clubs up and down the country with ex-Test cricketers such as Ron Headley (West Indies), Mushtaq Mohammed (Pakistan) and Greg Matthews (Australia) plying their trade while a young Dean Headley would go on to represent England.

But times have not been so kind since the club dropped out of the Birmingham League top flight in 2006 and last season's troubled campaign ended with them taking another hit.

But what's gone is gone as far as Javaid is concerned and he is only looking to the future.

His passion for the place is obvious as he talks about the good times and the bad.

"I was voted in as chairman in July last year so this will be my first full season in that role," said Javaid.

"But this is my 33rd season at the club. I have seen all the good times, everything that was going Old Hill won it. I have played here and watched games here when there has been five or six hundred people watching.

> ***"The numbers have declined but the better standard of cricket you play you will get people back."***

"Obviously the numbers have declined but the better standard of cricket you play you will get people back.

"We have got a fantastic following still. I am probably biased but as far as I am concerned it's the best in the league.

"Even now you will get 100, 200 people following. We need to give them something to shout about now."

After spending three decades at Old Hill Javaid is more qualified than most to comment and while he is upbeat and positive about the future, sometimes actions speak louder than words, and the club's first piece of winter recruitment speaks volumes.

Old Hill have made a statement of intent for the season ahead by signing former Warwickshire seamer Naqaash Tahir.

Tahir, a proven wicket-taker, posed plenty of problems for batsmen during his spells with Smethwick and Moseley.

He should prove quite a handful in division three and Javaid is delighted to have him on board and to spearhead what he hopes will be a turnaround in fortunes.

"Over the last few years things have gone backwards and unfortunately last year was the big one when we suffered relegation to division three," said Javaid.

"There were lots of reasons for that and it didn't help that we had four or five first team players injured for a long time throughout the season and then obviously the situation we had with the disciplinary hearing and being docked points after the Fordhouses game. That knocked us for six really.

"But we have said as a club that's happened and it's gone now. We have got to look to the future and we have got to be positive about things.

"And I think you can see signs of that positivity by signing Naqaash. He is a quality player.

Steeped

"We have been talking to him over the winter period and I think he wanted a new challenge."

Further new signings are in the pipeline for a side that will be once again led by Jonathan Wright, another man steeped in Old Hill's history, with Javaid insisting promotion is the aim.

"We want to be in the top two next season, we want to be promoted," said Javaid.

"There are lots of things happening at the club and with Naqaash coming, certainly on the cricket side, it's going to help us build as well.

"We are refurbing the clubhouse. We are having a new bar put in, new carpets, tables, chairs, curtains and that sort of stuff.

"We have got a new committee and we are all very, very keen to develop both the cricket side and the clubhouse.

"And a local company, Homeserve from Brierley Hill, are sponsoring us again.

"There is a lot of enthusiasm and we are looking forward to the season."

Sport

How's that? Cricket club looks to climb back up

Page 43

Suspension hitch hits rally hopes

STOURBRIDGE'S Richard Sykes suffered a disappointing end to his first rally of the season, the Cambrian, after mechanical problems forced him to retire on the penultimate stage while leading his class.

The opening stages were very wet and slippery but Sykes made a good start in his Bathams Brewery, The Body Clinic, Staniland Marina, Summit Platforms and GI Sykes Ltd-supported Citroën DS3 R3, taking the lead of his class.

"Conditions were very challenging early on," said Sykes. "As well as the slippery surface we also had visibility problems due to the very low sun dazzling us and there are some pretty big drops in Wales, so I drove quite cautiously but I was quick enough to be leading the class at first service. I was very happy with this as the stages were very tight and technical which doesn't really suit our car."

The following stages were more open and faster and Sykes stepped up the pace, not only leading his class but also setting fastest time of all the two-wheel drive cars. It looked as though Sykes and co-driver Simon Taylor would be getting their season off to a flying start but hopes were ended in stage six when a joint broke on the suspension, which meant thy could not carry on.

"We were going really well on the faster stages and we were absolutely on it when we had the suspension breakage. It's a shame we came away with no points but I'm pleased we showed we have the pace to be at the top of the two-wheel drive leaderboard."

Sykes will be competing again at the Malcolm Wilson rally in Cumbria in early March.

Andrews back in the saddle at Heathens

BRADLEY ANDREWS has been named as the final member of Cradley's National Trophy side.

New Zealand-born Andrews is back with the Heathens two seasons after making his British League debut with the club. He joins Adam Roynon, Jordan Jenkins, Kyle Bickley, Conor Dwyer, Drew Kemp and Jason Edwards in the line-up.

Andrews, is looking forward to his return. He said: "The supporters were great right through and a lot are still good friends, so I'm really looking forward to meeting up with everyone again.

"I think the team that has been picked for Cradley has some very strong riders in it and I'll have to be at my best to get my four rides."

Heathens Director Nigel Pearson said: "I'd like to congratulate Will Pottinger and Gary Patchett on the work they've done with the team."

Heathens have received an off-track boost with Motor Market continuing their role as title sponsors.

DKs prove too strong for Hereford

Hereford 5 Dudley Kingswinford 33

TOMMY Walker went under the post to open the scoring, and with Sam Vaughan adding the conversion it was 7-0 to Dudley Kingswinford.

The DK defence ensured that the Hereford attacks came to nothing

The DK attack caused Hereford more problems with its fast recycling of the ball, which this led to penalties and from one such penalty Sam Vaughan kicked the ball deep into the 22, Tom Evans found his man and Pete Griffiths was able to dot the ball down on the line, and Vaughan's conversion made it 14-0 to DK.

A third try before half time saw Matt Squires through a gap and a quick ruck saw the ball recycled for Jordan Brookes to Connah Jones then Stef Shillingford made a well-timed pass back for Danny Hawkins to crash hunder the posts. Five became seven thanks to Vaughan and it was 21-0 at half-time.

Vaughan timed his pass well and full-back Nic Adams was over the line and heading towards the posts, 26-0 to DK as they started to build a formidable lead.

Hereford's Leon Parsons proved a threat on his wing, but it was their scrum-half, who broke their duck with a typical number nine try.

DK completed their scoring with Shillingford's run to the line, converted by Vaughan.

The front row id a great job again but even better were the two guys in the row, Matt Perks and Dan Marsh.

DK have a weekend off but will be home on March 3 against Lutterworth.

TRIBUTES TO EAGLES BOSS

TRIBUTES have been paid to Ian Pound, President of Kewford Eagles FC, who died following a road traffic accident.

The stalwart for the Wall Heath-based club spent three weeks in the critical care unit at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital before his death on February 6.

His daughter-in-law Sarah Pound said "The hospital staff were wonderful and they really did try everything they could but unfortunately he could not be saved."

His funeral is being held on Wednesday,February 28, at 12.20pm at Stourbridge Crematorium. Donations in his memory will be divided between the critical care ward at the QE and the Air Ambulance, which had rushed him to the hospital.

Ian Pound was the longest serving member of the Kewford committee, joining in 1995 as team manager for a new under 9s team, assisted by his wife Wendy. He become chairman in 2000 and president of the football club four years later, a role he held until his untimely death.

Park

When Kewford achieved charter standard status Ian and Wendy managed the first Kewford Under 19s team and steered the club to achieving charter standard adult club status.

Ian was instrumental in helping to secure £800,000 funding from the Football Foundation towards the building of Eagle Park in Wall Heath, the club's new home for Kewford Eagles comprising 11 football pitches. It was formally opened by Sir Trevor Brooking in April 2012 and will be a lasting legacy.

Lynn Boleyn MBE, charity trustee of Kewford Eagles said: "We will always hold very special memories of such a truly remarkable person who would go out of his way to help people. He was dedicated to grassroots football and Kewford Eagles in particular."

Ian with wife Wendy and their grandchildren

At the Mayor of Dudley's Civic Awards in April 2013

Stourbridge clear at top of cricket league

STOURBRIDGE moved clear at the top WCB Indoor League north division with an 18-run won over Quatt.

After a steady start, aided by wayward bowling, the run rate later dropped and Stourbridge were bowled out for 109. Quatt conceded 27 wides and 13 no-balls. Quatt lost a wicket in the second over, but Stourbridge also bowled a proportion of wides. The loss of three quick wickets scuppered Quatt's hopes and late replacement Rob Willetts' (26no) efforts as last man standing failed to overhaul to Stourbridge total.

In the other game, Carl Whyte (26) and Dan Jones (34 no) gave Coombes Wood an ideal start, both retiring before the fifth over. At the halfway the score was 62-0, but the remaining batsmen failed to take advantage and they made 120-4.

In reply Waqas Ahmed scored 52 for Chaddesley Corbett' but the rate required was too much and they ended on 100-5.

Late goal is a glimmer for Glassboys

Stourbridge 2 Buxton 1

STOURBRIDGE got a vital three points – their first maximum in four home games – thanks to a quality strike by Leon Broadhurst deep into injury time.

The win keeps alive their chances of making the play-offs.

Stourbridge had the better of the second half after going into the break at 1-1.

Buxton goalkeeper Jan Budtz had a large part to play in denying Glassboys, saving from Kaiman Anderson on only three minutes and Paul McCone from the resulting corner.

The visitors thought they had taken the lead when Bradley Grayson bundled the ball into the net but the linesman had flagged for offside.

On the half-hour Grayson got his goal when a corner was punched out by Matt Gould and Joe Maguire's shot took a deflection before the defender latched onto it.

On 37 minutes the ball was in the path of Luke Benbow and he made no mistake to level.

In the second half three substitutes were introduced by Stour and it was the final one, Edilson Antonio, who made progress down the wing and crossed for Broadhurst to turn and shoot past former Wolves keeper Budtz.

Stourbridge boss Gary Hackett was delighted with the way his team perservered and ground out the result. But he is under no illusions how difficult it is going to be to get in the play-offs.

No mercy shown on Merseyside for Yeltz

Marine 1 Halesowen 0

A last-minute penalty miss cost Halesowen dear as their relegation rivals pulled away from bottom of the table.

Jordan Goddard saw his spot-kick saved by Martin Fearon as the Merseysiders took the spoils to leave Halesowen and Sutton Coldfield stranded, both having had points deducted.

Marine had taken the lead on 10 minutes when Liam Tongue was left unmarked from a Kenny Strickland corner and made no mistake. Daniel Platt did well to save a Florian Da Silva shot on 38 minutes, after Yelttz skipper Kyle Morrison had headed over from a free kick.

★★★

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